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PROJECT SPACE(S) IN THE DESIGN PROFESSIONS: AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST
STUDY OF THE WOMEN'S SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE (1974-1981)

A Dissertation Presented

by

ELIZABETH CAHN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2014

Regional Planning

PROJECT SPACE(S) IN THE DESIGN PROFESSIONS: AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST
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Mark T. Hamin, Chair

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Elisabeth M. Hamin, Department Head
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DEDICATION

For all those who came before

When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

. . .

When we have achievements that are based on theirs, we remember them.

Sylvan Kamens and Jack Riemer,
New Prayers for the High Holy Days

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The idea behind a dissertation cannot become reality without assistance from a large number of people over a long period of time. This one is no different.

I am grateful to my family for making education a priority. Without their support I probably would not have started down this path, and might not have persevered to the end of this research project.

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ABSTRACT

PROJECT SPACE(S) IN THE DESIGN PROFESSIONS: AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST STUDY OF THE WOMEN'S SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE (1974-1981)

SEPTEMBER 2014

ELIZABETH CAHN, B.ARCHITECTURE, RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

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The Women's School of Planning and Architecture (WSPA) was an ambitious, explicitly feminist educational program created by seven women planners and architects who used the school to introduce ideas and practices of the 1970s women's movement into design and planning education in the United States. Between 1974 and 1981, WSPA organized five intensive, short-term residential educational sessions and a conference, each in a different geographical location in the United States, after which the organization ceased formal programming and the organizers moved on to other activities. The founders and participants involved in WSPA collectively imagined and created a feminist space for environmental design teaching and learning through their evolving project, which was marked by interdisciplinarity, creativity, flexibility, egalitarian decision-making, and attention to diversity.

This study uses an interdisciplinary, intersectional feminist framework and feminist qualitative methodologies to investigate WSPA through analysis of archival materials, interviews of surviving members of the founding group, and experiences of the author in the same fields and professions. This research also locates WSPA within a historical review of women in the design professions in the US and links WSPA to early twentieth-century single-sex educational programs for women in architecture and landscape architecture, including Lowthorpe, the Pennsylvania School, and the Cambridge School.

This dissertation proposes the notion of *project space(s)* as a framework for identifying and valuing efforts to incorporate marginalized and excluded groups of people and critical theories about difference and diversity into the planning and design professions, even when such programs and activities are modest in scale, decentralized, or ephemeral. Project space(s) enrich these fields by introducing new

understandings of gender, race and ethnicity, social and economic class, sexuality and sexual orientation, and other sources of disenfranchised knowledge.

This study discusses methodological issues in identifying and studying project space(s) as well as conditions that contribute to their development, including connection to strong external movements for social change; visionary individuals within the fields linked to outside movements; access to resources such as funding and publicity; critique of educational processes and professional norms from within; preservation of collective memory; and creation of intentional discourse communities, even if temporary.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACSA	Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture
ACSP	Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
AIA	American Institute of Architects
AIAS	American Institute of Architecture Students
APA	American Planning Association
ASID	American Society of Interior Designers
ASLA	American Society of Landscape Architects
CELA	Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture
CR	Consciousness raising
HUD	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
NAAB	National Architecture Accrediting Board
NCARB	National Council of Architecture Registration Boards
OWA	Organization of Women Architects and Design Professionals (formerly OWA/DP)
RISD	Rhode Island School of Design
WAA	Western Association of Architects
WDC	Women's Design Center
WSPA	Women's School of Planning and Architecture

CHAPTER 1

THE SPACE(S) OF THIS PROJECT

Introduction

This dissertation is my effort to create a comprehensive, meaningful narrative out of my several-decades-long life journey in, around, and through the spatial and environmental design fields and professions of architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and interior design. My travels have included the study of several fields of design as well as architectural history, theory, and criticism; teaching architecture, design, and women's studies; engaging in feminist community activism; working in academic women's studies and publishing; and practicing art therapy.

At various points in this process I thought I might find a single coherent trajectory underlying these varied interests and life experiences; at other times it has seemed like nothing more than a random and occasionally bizarre series of likely dead ends connected merely by the fact that they all happened to me. I now recognize this fear as engendered by often being “outside the box”—that is, not fitting well or being comfortable in the standard life tracks and patterns laid down, often by those in positions of power, that seem to work—at least marginally—for other people. This does not mean that my path does not make sense, only that in order to find the significance of my experiences, I have very often had to draw my own map and be my own guide. I hope my reader will be interested in where I have gone and patient enough to see where I have ended up.

My philosophical grounding comes from a wide variety of sources, but the primary map-making tools that I use—theories, methodologies, and methods—are drawn from the design fields and from feminism and women's studies. Within these realms, however, I am not a “purist” of any sort. I use multiple techniques, in varied ways, at the locations where they seem most relevant and useful. I find mixed methods and hybrid processes to be enormously generative, especially when cutting across established fields with well-defined boundaries and making connections between ideas and practices that are usually kept apart. So be prepared for episodes of intellectual bushwhacking—which may be less than elegant—as I create a new analytical path and pursue new knowledge. This project is analytical *and* creative, theoretical *and* practical, highly personal, and I hope, eventually, productive for others as well.

To the extent that I have an overall “argument,” it is quite simple: All calls and efforts for more inclusiveness in the design professions—no matter what form of inclusion is under discussion or in which field—will have little effect if these efforts are not connected to related work in the other design professions, to broader social movements for civil rights and social justice, to people outside the fields who understand and can productively criticize each profession’s goals, and to the academic fields such as women’s studies that theorize and prioritize studying systems of power and making linkages between power, social privilege, and identity.

I’m not saying we need more programs for the underrepresented and underserved; new structures for inclusion of the excluded; or reformulated, ever more specialized academic subfields to capture and elaborate interdisciplinary forms of knowledge. These would be wonderful, but in an era of scarce resources and professions that are shrinking rather than expanding, they are wildly unlikely to occur. I believe that what is realistically possible and of real current value is more acknowledgement of work that has already been done and is being done; broader communication of analysis that already exists but is insufficiently known; increased connections between people with overlapping interests; and easier access to existing knowledge for those who can use that knowledge in a myriad of ways we have probably not yet imagined.

Professions, by their nature, establish boundaries and credentialing systems that intentionally and unintentionally marginalize those who don’t “fit”—whether through their race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability status, nationality, values, or any other of the evolving forms of difference that continue to be constructed as “other.” The design professions—architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and interior design—have organized themselves, like other professions such as engineering, medicine, and law, in a guild-like fashion, to provide specialized services for privileged, paying clients, and the abstract “public,” while limiting who can participate and policing the behavior of guild members in ways that serve certain interests and not others.

Historical and contemporary examples demonstrate that efforts to establish gender, race, and class consciousness in the design professions, as well as awareness of other relevant forms of difference such as ability and disability, have varied significantly in different fields, different eras, and in response to varying trends in broader social issues and concerns. The design fields remain relatively small compared to other

professions and to other forms of work such as construction or health care that affect the public at large, and yet the boundaries between these fields are strongly policed through education, licensure, and practice regulations that continue to evolve over time, generally becoming more restrictive and exclusive rather than flexible and inclusive.

This project strives to cross long-established disciplinary boundaries in order to understand multiple kinds of difference and glean strategies and tactics for grasping and enacting change that will be of value to those in the design professions and related fields that are not organized as professions, such as architectural history, urban design, environmental design, community planning, and building construction. I also hope to identify ways in which such change can be supported by the broader group of people who have an interest in how gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and other forms of identity and subjectivity relate to the designed and built environment, and to those who play a role in designing and building that environment in the myriad of ways that the design professions do not currently address.

WSPA as a Lens

The Women's School of Planning and Architecture (WSPA) was an explicitly feminist educational project, created by seven white women planners and architects in 1974. These women created the school to merge feminist values of the time with their beliefs about the role of design in creating physical and social environments, including the environment of the school itself. Between 1974 and 1981, an evolving group of women organized five two-week summer sessions in different parts of the United States and a final conference in Washington, DC. Nearly two hundred women attended the summer sessions; another 250 registered for the conference. Nineteen attended a reunion meeting in 2002 to celebrate the creation of the WSPA archives at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.¹

WSPA is the focus of this study and also a lens through which I will analyze the historical and contemporary situation of women and design education in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. The case study of WSPA that I carried out for this project is framed by the explicitly feminist

¹ WSPA had no direct association with Smith College, but the papers of Noel Phyllis Birkby, one of the founders of WSPA, came to the Sophia Smith Collection after Birkby's death in 1994. While Birkby's papers were being processed, her large collection of WSPA documents was separated out to form the core of the WSPA Records, which have been augmented with materials added later by other founders and participants.

goals of this ambitious educational organization. Many of the questions about women, gender, feminism, difference, and diversity that I explore through this research were generated from events and projects other than WSPA, but WSPA serves as a useful organizing schema to focus our attention in looking both backward in time to other efforts to engage women in the design fields, and forward in time to the present day.

Qualities of the Study

WSPA itself intentionally crossed many fields and invoked ideas from many intellectual traditions. This study thus also draws from research goals and methodologies found in multiple fields, including the design professions, history, and women's studies. To carry out the specific research plan I envisioned, I have woven together threads drawn from a number of different intellectual and scholarly approaches. The following qualities define the core elements of this research project.

Interdisciplinary

Interdisciplinarity is relevant to this study in both practical and theoretical ways. First, the project is interdisciplinary in terms of the design fields that I address. In my search for a field and type of work that “fit” for me, I have spent time in architecture; landscape architecture; planning; interior design; architectural history, theory, and criticism; and art therapy. I have been a student, a full time tenure-track member of the faculty, an itinerant adjunct lecturer, an employee and design consultant, an editor, an advisor and counselor, a therapist, an artist. Each stop along the way has provided learning, insight, skills and methods, and usually, more questions than answers.

The four fields and design professions I focus on in this project—planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design—are related in that they each bear some responsibility for planning and design of the physical environment, albeit at different scales. But they have widely varying areas of responsibility and focus, typically structure the relationship of clients and practitioners in different ways, utilize differing models of economic exchange, and produce varying amounts of social status for practitioners and clients. To someone from outside this group of fields or even someone in one field or

another, each profession's differing qualities and areas of expertise may seem to be a "just so" story—that is, a "natural" or "obvious" division of interests, labors, and responsibilities.

Closer study and a longer historical perspective will demonstrate that professional boundaries in the design fields demonstrate systematic gender and class dynamics, even if these are enacted unconsciously (and I will argue that this process is often intentional even if shielded from public view). Looking at these four fields together provides a more complete understanding of power dynamics in design, which can be observed in the gender and racial distribution of students and practitioners, patterns in the content of educational programs and courses, hurdles in the credentialing process, and many other aspects of the design fields and professions.

Interdisciplinarity is also relevant to this project in that I use work from multiple academic fields to develop theoretical perspectives and approaches to my research. The major sources I draw from are formulations in the design fields that seek to theorize or explain demographics and diversity. I use similar approaches from the group of academic disciplines that cluster under the concept of feminist studies, women's studies, and gender and sexuality studies. I have also used diverse methodologies, methods, and research strategies from the fields of design, the design process itself, and art and architectural history. Finally, I have learned from and utilized various sorts of qualitative approaches to research, practice, and activism.

An interdisciplinary approach to studying WSPA is important because this project was not only explicitly feminist, but an intentional collaboration between women in a variety of design fields and between professionally educated women and community members with similar interests in spatial design. Despite its challenges and relatively short, formal existence, WSPA was a model of interdisciplinary collaboration and creativity that may still provide useful lessons in carrying out other types of interdisciplinary, critical, feminist, and social justice related interventions in and through design.

Feminist

I chose feminism as another essential frame for this study because, like the founders of WSPA, I want to bring attention to circumstances that affect women in design, a set of fields and professions that have resisted gender analyses since their creation. Feminism remains a contested term because it is both

wide *and* narrow, general *and* specific, and has different meanings and significance for different audiences and in different settings. Here I will use feminism as a general framework for analysis that prioritizes attending to the circumstances of women, and in particular how circumstances appear and are experienced from the perspective of women. For this study, I do not adhere to any one type of feminism but rather will draw from a number of different strands to highlight historical and contemporary issues as needed for my narrative. I endeavor to navigate between the criticisms of “woman” as a monolithic, essentialist category and intentional uses of essentialism for purposeful social critique (Spivak 1987).

Feminist is a rich and provocative term that has come to mean many things to many people. In a simple way, it serves as a category that allows us to “see” women, to add them into our analysis of a circumstance, a situation, and a history. However, adding women into the story does not necessarily change the focus of attention. Another layer of feminist analysis actually prioritizes women and puts them at the center of the story. This shift from women as *objects* of study to *subjects* of study is an epistemological change, one that facilitates seeing the world from a different point of view.

WSPA itself was created during the “second wave” of feminism in the US, a period of strong interest in women’s issues and women’s rights.² During this time, many organizations and institutions were created to meet existing and newly identified needs of women—rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, and women’s health clinics. This was also the start of many academic women’s studies programs. In the forty years since that time, feminism has evolved from simpler and more dichotomous “equal rights” versus “cultural” theoretical positions to a myriad of more specialized critical frameworks used to analyze, understand, and create action plans to solve social problems that affect women. Many feminist frameworks incorporate broader analysis of power relations in society and in the family, which links feminist values very closely to other critical analyses of power differences related to race, ethnicity, economic and social status, and sexuality as well as a myriad of other issues such as nationality, immigration, and marital status (Combahee River Collective 1986, Anzaldúa 1987, Spivak 1987, Hill Collins 1990). More recent

² This refers to the notion that US feminism occurred in “waves”: The first wave comprised the late nineteenth and early twentieth century efforts to expand women’s rights, culminating in women obtaining suffrage; the second wave refers to post-civil rights activism of the 1960s and 1970s, a period in which political and employment representation, family structure, and women’s sexuality were prioritized; the third wave of feminism originated in the early 1990s and brought forward the concerns of queer and non-white women. The “wave” metaphor has been widely critiqued but remains a commonly used shorthand for identifying these historical periods.

theoretical forms of feminism have taken on the name of “intersectional” to show their commitment to addressing these more complex relational elements of power (Crenshaw 1989, Barkeley Brown 1992, Sandoval 2000, Sato 2004, Yung 2004).

Intersectional

Intersectional is another term that can be used in different ways, at a variety of “scales.” Intersectionality refers to the idea that multiple social and identity differences are not “stand alone” qualities, but relate to each other and have effects in complex and sometimes unpredictable ways. For example, the qualities and experiences of being “female” and of being “black” are distinctly different, and the qualities of being simultaneously female and black are not discovered simply by adding one set of circumstances to the other, but may be something else entirely. We cannot assume in advance that we know how different forms of identity, privilege, and power will affect each other, and we must assume that they are not additive; rather, these must be interrogated in each circumstance and situation to be fully understood (Crenshaw 1989).

Intersectionality is an important concept in studying difference and discrimination because it allows for more subtle analysis of group and individual positionality on the basis of many relevant factors, not just one or two. Intersectionality, as a tool of anti-oppression theorizing and activism, provides a means of understanding the power dynamics of privilege, rank, and status as systematic, inflected in typical ways, *and* malleable. In particular, the concept of intersectionality creates a richly useful frame for analysis of power relations in society. Rather than saying one group is inevitably “better off” or “worse off” than another, intersectionality allows us to see how membership in any group and the consequences of that circumstance are often affected by other qualities that make the original issue more or less salient, or qualitatively different.

Intersectionality is useful for this study for two reasons: first, it serves as a critical frame that allows us to view multiple differences simultaneously and “unpack” different types and forms of identity, subjectivity, discrimination, and oppression; second, intersectionality allows us to understand how a particular position may function differently at different times and in different circumstances. For example, the women who created WSPA were marginalized as women in the design fields of architecture and

planning, but empowered by their white and predominantly middle-class backgrounds to have access to professional educations and the expectation that they could affect the conditions under which they worked to their liking. The interaction of these forms of privilege and exclusion shaped their ideas and actions. Understanding these complex dynamics is necessary to “unpack” their accomplishments, and uncover models for future action in these fields.

Qualitative

A methodology is an organized set of ideas about how to conduct research that explains the researcher’s philosophical beliefs about the purpose and goals of the research, how the research is carried out, the specific techniques or methods, and an ethical stance about how the methods are used. Research methodologies are grouped broadly into two categories—quantitative and qualitative—but this dichotomy oversimplifies a complex world of philosophies, methodologies, and methods for developing new knowledge. Quantitative and qualitative methodologies both seek to explain complex phenomena but typically focus on different types of questions and approach the available data in different ways. Quantitative methodologies are well suited for research questions that seek general rules or principles by assigning predetermined concepts to limited types and quantities of data, while qualitative research generally pursues more complex explanations, based on evolving frameworks, of more types and larger quantities of data.

Research methodologies and methods express the fundamental epistemological frameworks of the research they are used to carry out. In this case, qualitative methodologies are most appropriate for this study, which, rather than creating any consistent frame, standardized questions, or quantifiable outcomes, are intended to find questions, explore options, and elicit new frames of reference. I position myself quite firmly in the critical, post-modernist mode of inquiry, in that I focus on issues of power; address embodied experiences such as race, class, gender, and other categories of identity and lived experience; and acknowledge that my work as a researcher is inevitably inflected by my own identities and positionalities (Rossman and Rallis 2003, 93).

Historical

This dissertation grew out of my initial interest in WSPA as a “case” that could be analyzed in relation to the fields of architecture and planning, using the critical and analytical frame of feminism. As I moved into carrying out this case study, I came to understand that WSPA was and is important not only as an example of 1970s feminist activism in design, but as part of a much longer narrative about women, gender, difference, discrimination, organizing, institution-building, and activism in the design fields more broadly.

Within this longer trajectory, the single-sex women’s educational programs in architecture, landscape architecture, and planning are not merely curiosities, but evidence of the effects that broad-based social movements can have, and have had, on the design fields. The initial case study remains a core element in this project, but I also use it to raise questions and elicit larger themes in the design fields in the United States that I have addressed through a historical review spanning from the mid-nineteenth century to the time period in which WSPA was created. This historical framework helps identify the ebb and flow of social issues and changes that affected women in society at large as well as women in the design fields. At certain times, new opportunities in design education and design were created for relatively large numbers of women, while at other times these opportunities shrank or disappeared entirely.

These external movements were not enough to change the design fields on their own; key individuals kept such ideas alive and carried them to fruition through their commitment to women’s increasing participation in these fields. Of course these opportunities were seldom, if ever, equally available for white and non-white women, or economically privileged and less-privileged ones. A historical study also highlights the roles that women have played in the development of the design fields in other ways—in design theory, in design history and criticism, and in developing new forms of practice and education.

This historical review identifies spaces where cross-disciplinary thinking and linkages have created new positionalities and subjectivities in both practice and education. WSPA is one of those examples, and a close study shows some of the means by which new ways of thinking were supported and carried out. Environmental design and planning issues affect women as well as men, and historically marginalized groups as well as mainstream ones. Why shouldn’t “outsider” voices be included in the process of identifying and solving problems related to environments and design? Connecting concerns of

environmental design to broad-based civil rights and social justice movements can create new knowledge, innovative linkages, and effective projects, even if the professions themselves do not fully or gladly open their doors to new participants and new ways of thinking.

Autobiographical

This entire project is generated and informed by my own experiences in and out of the design fields, which have helped me formulate the questions and construct some of the answers. Further, the process is an iterative one that has many layers, which continue to evolve. I didn't "do" the study and then write it up; the "doing" is part of my life, and the "writing" is part of the "doing." While this is not explicitly an autoethnography, I have been inspired by the work of those who have used that form of research and writing to document their own life paths in their scholarship.

A large part of my research has been the experience of living through the process of obtaining educational credentials and work experience in various design fields and areas of feminist activism, not because I was working on this study but because I was simply trying to find a place in the world of work that felt comfortable and sustainable. I'm not sure I've succeeded in that, even now, but it's been an interesting journey and has prepared me for this project. I am not fully grounded in *all* of the design fields or *every* segment of feminist activism and women's studies, but I'm not an outsider either.

As someone who occupies both the inside and outside of the fields I write about, perhaps my real position is that of critic. The role of critic is a delicate one, as one must be enough of an insider to understand what you critique and enough of an outsider to know something else, while remaining credible to both audiences. The risk of being rejected by all sides is high, and while anticipating that rejection, I must also expend the energy needed to maintain connections with all parties. This is not an easy task; it takes effort to find a balance.

Creative

One of the core skills taught in a design education is how to approach problems with an open mind and explore multiple options before determining how to proceed. Solutions that have worked in the past may provide useful examples and even templates for responding to the next set of circumstances, but one is

trained to seek unique solutions that respond to each individual set of requirements, from meeting the needs of site, program, and client to adapting to historical and cultural environs.

The ability to trust the design process itself as a resource for continually new, creative productions is both a blessing and a curse. It's exciting to know that this process can produce something as-yet-unknown—but at times the pressure to produce something without predetermined structures for the outcome can feel like free falling to the bottom of the universe. I worked on various aspects of what will appear in these pages over a seven-year period, but it was not until fairly near the end that I was finally able to imagine or grasp how the entire thing would fit together.

An understanding of the creative process is important in any intellectual work, but it has a particular salience for this project. The design professions depend on practitioners with well-developed creative and iterative problem-solving skills, and the few schools for women have each, in their own time and place, taken on this goal and pursued it to a newly imagined form. Building on these educational traditions, the founders of WSPA envisioned a radically new form of design education, one that would weave the best parts of conventional design education together with new feminist values.

My intention was to explore the history, issues, and challenges of these endeavors using an equally open and creative approach. While the dissertation must adhere to certain structural and stylistic requirements, where possible I have sought alternative methods for producing and communicating this research project that express some of the creativity inherent in the endeavors I have been studying. I have explored my ideas using visual media as well as writing; I have looked at the entities I study at a variety of scales (in both time and space); and I have used drawing and diagramming as well as writing to analyze my findings. This document does not manifest all of these methods, but I intend to demonstrate them further in my future scholarship.

Scope, Assumptions, and Limitations

This project started as a case study of an activist project that lasted about eight years and that took place over thirty years ago. My original goals were to document WSPA while some of the founders are living and our collective memory of the relevant time period and events are still accessible (perhaps clouded by time but hopefully not dementia). I hoped that we could collectively reconstruct some of the

best aspects of its creation and activities in more detail than has yet been done by anyone outside of the founders, and extract some lessons from the hard work expended by the women who created it and participated in it.

Beyond this, I have considered WSPA's goals, and programs within both the US women's movement of the 1970s and the longer historical development of design education since the mid-nineteenth century. Finally, I have considered which elements of WSPA's multifaceted activist approach to change might be revisited or revised for contemporary education in these fields and suggested areas for future research, scholarship, and activism.

As the core of this project is a single case study, any specific principles I identify or conclusions I reach will not be broadly generalizable. At a more abstract level of inquiry, however, such a study can illuminate useful principles and lessons that may be transferable to similar or related types of projects.

Other limitations of this study relate to both the people involved in WSPA and the documents related to it. Only five of the seven founders are still living, and although I interviewed all five, in most cases we spent only a few hours together, never more than about half a day. I asked them all the same, Institutional Review Board-approved questions, and although we wandered to additional topics within each interview, the general approach was constrained by the ideas I had in mind when I generated the questions.

Many records and papers, photographs, audio tapes, films, and other material objects related to WSPA have been saved and deposited in archives, but other important items may have been lost or destroyed. And inevitably I have viewed and analyzed these materials through my own perspective and critical lens, which has been shaped by my life experiences and is certainly individual, if not unique.

Another aspect of this project that is both an assumption and a limitation is my determination to make connections between the design fields as a group and between these fields and the fields of women's studies. I have a deep belief that all kinds of people—not just privileged white males—have been active in the creation of the designed and built environment, and the work of all participants is valuable and worthy of study even if it falls outside the boundaries of professional expertise and accomplishment. Some might argue that social theories and methodologies are not relevant to the design fields, or that one simply can't be grounded enough in such diverse intellectual traditions to be able to conduct intellectual work across the

differences. I disagree. Finally, this is a very personal project and it will be both deepened and limited by my own experiences and perceptions of the fields in which I share experiences with the founders of WSPA.

Structure and Form

As befits a slightly unorthodox dissertation, the structure and organization of this document also vary a bit from the norm. Writing a dissertation is probably not an easy task for anyone, but I have struggled with producing a written document of this length and complexity after education and training in design, where writing is useful but not centrally important. I was taught how to draw, how to construct one-point and two-point (and even three-point) perspectives; I learned how to read landscapes and drawings and texts and people's expressions and their body language. I've been given skills in analyzing building programs and documents and interviews; I was taught how to lay out a set of architectural plans; and later I even learned how to put an academic journal together. I've picked up a fair amount of sense about organizational behavior and politics. I even enjoy the challenge of writing and have managed to produce two master's theses. But in all of that, I was never really taught to write, especially something this long and complex.

As WSPA was a design-focused project itself, I wanted my study of WSPA to convey something of that world. The idea of using WSPA as a lens for looking at multiple fields and long-term history suggested sections of radically differing types, which I eventually understood as manifesting different theories and methodologies. A myriad of visual resources in the archives begged to be included. Standard social-science organizational formats didn't seem to allow for the complexity of either the vision of the founders in creating WSPA, or mine in conveying my analysis of it.

I finally decided to approach this challenge as I would a large-scale physical design project. In particular, I used strategies I learned as a designer to organize and develop the structure of the dissertation as a document. Rather than working on the computer or conventional sheets of paper, I taped large sheets of drawing paper up on the wall and began to diagram the important elements of the dissertation project and of my argument. I made circles and boxes, grids, and lists. I layered things over each other in different ways. I elaborated my drawings with notes and color. I cut things out and taped them in different places, and moved them around.

I know a lot of this can be done using technology, but for me it was important to work on these drawings and notes at the scale of the body, while standing up, and at a size that I could read from several feet away. I did all of this in a narrow hallway of my house, which is only about eight feet long, but every time I walked through it, I was stimulated to think about the project, reconsider whether the diagrams made sense, and jot down other ideas as they appeared in my mind.

I kept drawing, diagramming, writing notes, and moving the pieces around until the basic structure made sense. I had written a great deal during the years of my PhD studies, but I needed to have a “picture” of the whole thing in order to compose this final document. Words like *parti* and *esquisse*, that I had not thought of for years—terminology from the Ecole des Beaux Arts used to describe early, holistic sketches of a design project—began to run through my head. It felt very different from most of my other doctoral work, but completely right for this project. I eventually found a structure that seemed to “fit” my needs. Whenever I felt “lost” in the process of writing, I would return to diagramming to make sense of where I had ended up and find a new path to get back on track. Although little of the design and diagramming process I describe here is directly visible in this final document, the organization and elaboration of my argument would not have been possible without it.

In its final form, this dissertation conforms to the linear, narrative format of most social science dissertations, with some changes in response to the needs of my particular research study. The “core” of the work is the case study of WSPA, which was conducted using interviews and archival materials. This case study is grounded in a matrix of interdisciplinary theory and methodology as well as a historical analysis of multiple professions and their relationships, both of which are necessary for understanding the significance of WSPA within its related fields and its long-term historical context.

In Chapter 2, I have combined my discussion of theories and methodologies relevant to this work. These theories and methodologies are drawn from both design and feminist studies, and focus on concepts of space and the use of different forms of intersectionality to address specific analytical and activist challenges. Appendix A contains a discussion of more specific methods, ethical dilemmas, and strategies I used for my research, and describes their consequences for the research process and outcomes.

Chapter 3 creates a historical framework for understanding WSPA through a review of the development of the design fields and professions in the United States, a brief discussion of women’s

contributions to the planned and designed environment outside of these professions, the history of single-sex education for women in planning and the design professions, and an analysis of the social and historical conditions under which WSPA was created. These interlocking narratives describe the temporal context for WSPA, in which it can be understood as a new but not entirely unique educational intervention.

Chapters 4 and 5 document my case study of WSPA. Chapter 4 is a summary of the basic information about the seven founders, the organizational steps they went through to start up WSPA programs, and details about the actual sessions and final conference. Chapter 5 contains my explicit analysis of WSPA events and accomplishments.

Chapter 6 brings the lessons of WSPA and the larger context together by identifying themes and principles for the development of project spaces and continued movement toward equity in the design and planning fields.

Audience

Two quotations related to design continue to haunt me, and it is the dissonance between them that drives this work. In 1977, when WSPA had run two successful summer programs and was organizing the third, the architectural historian Spiro Kostof published an edited collection of essays on architecture with the title *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession*. By the time I encountered the book, probably half a decade later, I had been trained to read such literature thoroughly, and naturally I started with Kostof's Preface, which begins as follows: "Architecture," he writes, "cannot be the world's oldest profession—tradition has decided that long ago—but its antiquity is not in doubt" (Kostof 1977, 2001, v).

Of course Kostof's reference to "the world's oldest profession" was an invocation of prostitution, by women in the service of men. Without directly mentioning women, Kostof managed to simultaneously invoke their presence, sexualize, and marginalize them as a group and social class, eliminate them as having anything to do with his continuing remarks and the subject matter of the book, establish the antiquity of the profession of architecture, and legitimize this entire set of operations through the invocation of male-identified and male-dominated "tradition," a classic power move used to legitimate all kinds of ideologies and practices that actually deserve more careful analysis.

I suspect Kostof's introductory sentence was little more than an offhand remark, the kind of light phrase you might use to open a talk in which you want to get the audience's attention and emphasize how much you all have in common without saying anything too serious. That might work for some readers but as a young woman in architecture, what I got out of it was "you are not my audience and I don't give a damn." Although the edited collection includes an important essay by Gwendolyn Wright on women in architecture and several other essays by women, their contributions and significance to the field are undermined from the start.

Around the same time I was also reading essays by the Jewish feminist and lesbian poet and writer Adrienne Rich. In a 1984 talk, later published as an essay on women's education, she wrote this passage:

And there is no way of measuring the damage to a society when a whole texture of humanity is kept from realizing its own power, when the woman architect who might have reinvented our cities sits barely literate in a semilegal sweatshop on the Texas-Mexican border, when women who should be founding colleges must work their entire life as domestics, when poets and community leaders and visionaries and ordinary people with heart and wit, with a tale to tell, a hand that can paint or carve, are dying from uranium-contaminated water and the dumping of carcinogenic wastes. I am talking about the loss, not just to certain communities, but to all of us—deliberate wasting of lives, not natural disaster (Rich 1984, 190-191).

Without marginalizing men or minimizing their contributions, she points out the broad losses to the entire culture when women are denied access to education and the full opportunity to contribute their skills, talent, and vision to society. Thirty-five years later, these conditions have not changed for many women.

Although it's tempting, I don't wish to expend my energy on attacking Kostof and defending Rich. I present them here to highlight the dissonance between their statements and to emphasize that my audience for this work is anyone who feels some resonance of that dissonance within themselves as they read these remarks. Why is gender even an issue in architecture, planning, or any other activity of design? On the face of it, one might think it's totally irrelevant—women and men alike occupy the physical environment, we all need and use landscapes, cities, gardens, and built structures. With the exception of toilet facilities and special-use spaces such as locker rooms or birthing suites, there's little about buildings per se that might even, at first glance, possess any gender or sex-related qualities, let alone enact other forms of difference such as race or sexuality.

Some would argue that Kostof's comment isn't worth this much analysis as it was basically a throwaway remark that most readers of the book wouldn't even notice. I contend that it is precisely the general insignificance of the remark that demonstrates how deeply such ideas and values are embedded in

the fields that are the subject of this dissertation. Architecture serves in large part as a model for the other spatial design professions, including planning, which have at a minimum, adopted attitudes and practices that are exclusive rather than inclusive. Members of these professions have generally failed to critique the professional norms and values that routinely and systematically marginalize and exclude groups of people who use the planned, designed, and built environment. I believe these “other” people have ideas about the environment that are as valid as the much smaller number who pass through the gates that control education and practice in the design professions.

A question that always hums along in the back of my mind is, “Who is this knowledge for?” In this work I endeavor to live out the attitude expressed by Adrienne Rich: No matter who you are, or where your life experiences have situated you, your experiences are important, and you, too, have something to share in the process of imagining and creating the designed environment in which we all must live.

Goals

A dissertation, by its very nature, is a kind of “master work”; not actually the work of the most accomplished creator, but good enough to show that the apprentice has “mastered” the task they’ve been trained to perform. Thankfully it doesn’t have to be the greatest work of its kind. The scope of this project is probably way too broad, but that’s what happens when a big-picture thinker tries to write about what she’s learned over a thirty-year period. I console myself, as much as I can, with two thoughts—first, I read somewhere that historians tend to do their best and most creative work later in life, probably because they have seen enough change to understand what’s really going on—and second, that this doesn’t have to be perfect, just good enough. This has been a long process, and in this document I will share with you some of the questions that have driven me forward, sometimes into a particular field of study or type of work, at other times toward an idea or task that has taken on a special importance, even if only for a period of time.

Although the range and scope of the ideas I investigate in this project are expansive, my conclusions may seem, to some, rather limited. I am not going to throw myself up against the strong high walls of the existing professions, nor propose (no matter how tempting) that we create a new interdisciplinary field. In a world of well-established players it always feels necessary to fire a big gun; make a “strong” argument; produce a waterproof and damning criticism, of *something*. I’m not sure I have

that kind of energy, and I don't have access to the kind of resources such a battle would require. I've seen other young, small fields like art therapy expend way too much effort flailing against the more established fields of psychiatry and psychology to want to go down that path.

What I do hope is that in these pages I have developed an approach to questions about women, gender, feminism, and design that will make use of the enormous amount of work that's already been done in these areas. I continue to wonder why it is that the same or very similar critical analyses are performed over and over, and the same or similar suggestions for change made again and again, and yet so little changes. What are we missing, or perhaps the better question would be, *how* are we missing it? I believe the topics I explore in this dissertation can help answer these questions and shape new and useful ones.

Instead of forging a major new road, my role—I hope—is to walk some already-traveled paths and find things of value that have been left behind, so that we can recover what's been dropped or temporarily forgotten but deserves to be picked up again. I hope to be one of the voices that keep radical ideas alive until the next large infusion of energy comes along. I won't be proposing new fields of activity, but instead, new attitudes toward the ones that already exist; new practices rather than new professions; new tactics rather than new strategies (de Certeau 1984).

The main ideas I propose for anyone interested in women, gender, feminism, and the design and planning fields and professions:

--Approach these fields in an interdisciplinary way.

--Approach the task of increasing diversity and moving toward equity in an intersectional way.

--Always inquire about power relations; meaning, ask *who benefits and how, who is marginalized and excluded, and why*.

--Work on supporting the people who are marginalized and excluded, especially when that group includes you.

--Know that your efforts will shift things, even if only a tiny bit, and this is important to someone—if not now, in the future.

I write with equal parts of excitement, anticipation, and anxiety. Of course, all errors, inaccuracies, and misrepresentations are my own.

Now, time to get started.

CHAPTER 2

INVESTIGATING PROJECT SPACE(S)

Introduction

The longer I work on this project, the more I understand that theory, methodology, and method are deeply interdependent and mutually constitutive. Excellent research needs all three elements, and the relationship between them needs to be articulate and appropriate for the project. Theory consists of a set of basic assumptions, grounded in a philosophy; methods are specific strategies for collecting, analyzing, and “making meaning” from the data; and methodology is the narrative that elucidates the relationships between theories and methods. All are necessary for a completely developed project or study. Although any of them may serve as the beginning point of an investigational journey, they should evolve and work together as a group. Sometimes a theory will suggest a certain method should be used; sometimes using a method that suits the data reveals underlying, perhaps previously unrecognized, theoretical foundations; and in either case, methodology—whether chosen in advance or extracted during the research process—has to effectively weave together the assumptions and strategies that comprise a particular research activity.

The interdisciplinary nature of this project requires theories, methodologies, and methods drawn from sources broad enough to encompass the important qualities of the various entities I am studying—WSPA as a historical entity; the women who imagined and created it; and the questions that grow out of its location at the nexus of the spatial design professions, design education, and feminist activism, in which I have personal involvement and experience. For this project I need theories, methodologies, and methods that, at the very least, address women, gender, and other forms of difference; explicate issues related to professions and practice; and situate me, the researcher, in the work. For these reasons I have gravitated toward theories and methodologies that explicitly engage with questions of epistemology, the branch of philosophy that looks at processes of knowledge creation and explores questions such as what constitutes knowledge, who is empowered to “know,” and what it is that one can “know about.” Feminist epistemologies, in particular, have provided a vantage point from which I have come to a deeper understanding of the story of WSPA and clarity about other, more long-standing, issues for women and

other marginalized groups in the design fields (Harding 1991; Fonow and Cook 1991, 2005; Barkley Brown 1992; Hesse-Biber, Nagy, and Yaiser 2004; Sprague and Kobrynowicz 1999).

In addition, because this research addresses the spatial design professions, I felt it was important to use approaches that bring some sort of spatial quality to my analysis, synthesis, and eventual conclusions. “Space” is a notion with many meanings and uses; here I will briefly locate my study within a cluster of theories developed by spatial geographers, including David Harvey (2006), Henri Levebvre (1991), and the work of several feminist geographers (McDowell 1993a, 1993b, 1999; Massey 1994). I found Harvey’s spatial metaphors and organizational schemes to be most useful for understanding relevant theories and methodologies as well as understanding WSPA itself. I have also used many ideas and strategies from the form of research called “grounded theory,” a research methodology that prioritizes seeking and using ideas that are “grounded” specifically in the data generated through the project (Charmaz 2006, Corbin and Strauss 2008, Saldaña 2009). I discuss this in the final section of this chapter and also in Appendix A, where I describe my analytical process in more detail.

In this chapter, I review theories and methodologies that have been developed in a number of different fields and that I use to approach WSPA from a number of different perspectives. In keeping with my “relational” approach to this study, I have utilized different approaches for different portions of the work, and they do not always neatly “nest” inside one another or fit into a standard hierarchical ordering system, although later in this chapter I attempt to systematize them in Table 1. I have chosen and applied each perspective because at that particular point it helps me achieve one or another of my major goals, which are to bring interdisciplinary and intersectional frames of analysis to WSPA and its context; to untangle complex ideologies and motivations, not with the goal of “explaining” them but rather “complicating” them in an instructive way; and to add to the history of women’s work in design in part through my own perspective, experience, and voice.

This project is not “pure” in any way; it manifests a mixed and peripatetic approach developed through a long apprenticeship in multiple fields, disciplines, and areas of social endeavor. Given my background, it’s probably not surprising that I am drawn to theories, methodologies, and methods for research that speak to this experience of boundary-crossing, mixed identities, and hybrid approaches. In carrying out interdisciplinary intellectual work that links the design fields and feminism, I have struggled

with the problem of where to begin and how to approach this work. The spatial design fields of planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design comprise a realm of related fields of great interest to me, but provide little foothold for the feminist perspective I want to utilize in understanding and changing them. Feminism offers critical frameworks that facilitate analysis of women, gender, and multiple forms of difference, and have increasingly addressed the notion of “space,” but seldom directly address professions, the activities of planning and design, or the education of designers and planners.

I know the starting point for this project can be neither arbitrary nor innocent, yet, like any creation myth, it will establish parameters for the future from which one cannot escape. I have found numerous theories, methodologies, and methods to be useful at different points in the preparation, research, and writing process of this project, and they have evolved over time, and continue to evolve. This chapter provides an overview and describes the various intellectual locations that have provided a foothold for exploring the interdisciplinary and intersectional questions I have about professional practice, feminist education, and activism in the spatial design fields and professions. This entire endeavor may be perceived by some as rather “undisciplined” in the conventional academic sense—I acknowledge these concerns, yet carry on. I make no claims to completeness or correctness, only to an internal authority governed by the personal integrity of the researcher.

Theory and Theories

In an earlier paper, I explored the notion of space as a conceptual framework for exploring the relationships between planning theory and feminist theory (Cahn 2007). This exploration of “space” as an organizing tool for understanding theories helped me to identify and group useful and group theories for researching the links between feminism and design, and later served as a process for identifying useful methodologies as well.

It may seem self-evident that design activities carried out in three-dimensional space can be understood in spatial terms. But in the last three decades, the notion of “space” has been expanded to become a critical framework for exploring far more abstract and conceptual notions (de Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991; DePauw 1996; Soja 1996; Rendell, Penner, and Borden 2000; Harvey 2006; Warf and Arias 2009). Even in the activities of spatial design, I am less interested in how these fields are spatial in a

literal sense—meaning that they deal with three-dimensional space—than in how theories of planning and design represent and enact different theoretical concepts of space; concepts that also provide a perspective from which to analyze and understand theories of feminism. Thus my use of the term “space” for this project will be not just geometric but also abstract and conceptual. This section is an attempt to create a working model of notions of space that will help me explore and understand how theory can be used to think about the work of planners, designers, and feminists at this abstract, conceptual level.

The Spatial Turn (Warf and Arias 2009) is a recent edited collection of essays addressing these multiple concepts of space. In ten chapters, multiple authors demonstrate how thinking in spatial terms has energized theory and creative production through discussions of human geography, mapping practices, and the fields of English studies, historiography, anthropology, politics, sociology, and religion. While the concepts of space are enriching these fields, I still find it remarkable that space can be discussed at such length and in so many interesting ways and still yet so seldom mention design, designers, or how designers might, or do, interact with and affect the literal and intellectual spaces that are the subject of so many of these works.

Among these explorations of space, I found David Harvey’s spatial categories of *abstract*, *relative*, and *relational* to be useful in organizing and understanding theories of gender and difference in both the design fields and women’s studies. In “Space as a Keyword,” Harvey, a Marxist geographer, proposed *space* as a comprehensive concept akin to other entries such as *culture* and *nature* discussed by the Marxist cultural critic Raymond Williams in his “celebrated text on *Keywords*” (Harvey 2006, 270). Harvey justified the overarching use of *space* as appropriate, given his starting place as a geographer, and went on to offer and amplify several typologies of space: his own organizational scheme, comprising absolute, relative, and relational space; and the schemes of Cassirer (organic, perceptual, and symbolic) (1923/1925/1929); Lefebvre (material space, representation of space, and spaces of representation) (1992); and Langer (aesthetic) (1953). Harvey’s notion of space is primarily conceptual, yet he acknowledges the reality of built and occupied spaces, at least within cities, as concepts that can be understood more deeply through these conceptual and analytic frameworks. From my own starting place as an architect, designer, and planner I also find Harvey’s use of the notion of space to be inspirational and provocative for my study of WSPA.

David Harvey summarized his concepts of space in 1973 as follows:

If we read space as absolute it becomes a “thing in itself” with an existence independent of matter. It then possesses a structure which we can use to pigeon-hole or individuate phenomena. The view of relative space proposes that it be understood as a relationship between objects which exists only because objects exist and relate to each other. There is another sense in which space can be viewed as relative and I choose to call this relational space—space regarded in the manner of Leibniz, as being contained in objects in the sense that an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects. (Harvey 1973, cited in Harvey 2006, 271)

Absolute space is the simplest concept, because it is “fixed and we record or plan events within its frame” (Harvey 2006, 272). Absolute space is characterized by standardized measurement, a single point of view, discrete and bounded phenomena, and a sense of mastery and control. In this absolute realm, space and time are both abstract and bounded, enclosing limits “from which all uncertainties and ambiguities could in principle be banished and in which human calculation could uninhibitedly flourish” (272). Spaces of this sort are limited and separate, and do not blend or overlap. You are in one or another, not both or many. For Harvey, this is space as per Descartes, or essentially a structuralist view of space.

Relative space is more complex than absolute space and is characterized by two types of relativity: first, there are “multiple geometries from which to choose,” and second, “the spatial frame depends crucially upon what it is that is being relativized and by whom” (Harvey 2006, 272). Relative spaces are multiple and may be overlapping or intersecting, with the potential for many to be perceived or known simultaneously. Relative space makes it possible to recognize that “the standpoint of the observer plays a critical role” (273). This introduces the problem of time, because views from different standpoints will vary according to the time at which observations are made. Relative space is more complex than abstract space, but also more accurate for understanding certain types of situations as it tends to highlight problems such as different views of the same phenomenon and conflicts over limited resources. For Harvey, this is space according to Einstein, or more like a poststructuralist view of space.

Relational space is even more complex in that “there is no such thing as space or time outside of the processes that define them . . . Processes do not occur *in* space but define their own spatial frame. The concept of space is embedded in or internal to process . . . [and] it is impossible to disentangle space from time. We must therefore focus on the relationality of space-time rather than of space in isolation” (Harvey 2006, 273). A relational view of space acknowledges that spaces can co-exist that cannot be understood from one another or in any consecutive, additive, or simultaneous manner. Because it inevitably includes

both space and time, Harvey points out that “the relational terrain is an extremely challenging and difficult terrain upon which to work” (274); one must constantly consider multiple, shifting sources and forms of information. However, it is the only type of space that provides a way to address “certain topics, such as the political role of collective memories in urban processes” (274). For Harvey, this is space as per Leibniz; that is, that multiple, completely independent universes can exist, with no means of establishing a finite relationship between them.

Given these increasing levels of complexity, intuitively it seems that absolute space is encompassed within relative space and relative space is encompassed within relational space. But how do relational and abstract space relate to each other? There are at least two possibilities: First, absolute space exists in a world that includes relative and relational space, even if only in its attempts to deny or actively refute the relative and relational perspectives. A second possibility is that the fine-grained, subtle, and shifting analysis characteristic of relational space may ultimately result in another form of absolute space, a kind of universal “it always depends” perspective. Although there may be a tendency to consider these different conceptions of space as mutually exclusive and hierarchical, Harvey prefers to consider them as categories within which we work simultaneously. He writes, “Space is neither absolute, relative, or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it” (Harvey 1973, cited in Harvey 2006, 275). As a theoretical framework for approaching complex questions, this use of space both allows and requires a thoughtful, well-crafted strategy for any particular study, including mine.

One of the strengths of a spatial approach is that it provides a way to understand abstract, relative, and relational approaches simultaneously and in relation to each other. Abstract, relative, and relational are not “spaces” per se, but ways of thinking about and using notions of space for strategic purposes. Circumstances change over time, sometimes quickly, but in a given situation, “the decision to use one or other conception certainly depends on the nature of the phenomena under investigation” (Harvey 2006, 275). Beyond this, Harvey argues that it is “far more interesting in principle to keep the three concepts in dialectical tension with each other and to think constantly through the interplay among them” (276). The idea that these types of space conceptually coexist allows for more sophisticated analyses, as well as for

strategic or time-limited uses of one or more approaches depending on the unique qualities of particular situations or needs. Thus, there is “bound to be a liminality about spatiality itself because we are inexorably situated in all three frameworks simultaneously, though not necessarily equally so” (277). These three kinds of space always exist in relation to each other, even on the part of those who promote one form over another.

Harvey’s chief argument for relational space is that, as a working geographer, it allows him to analyze certain topics that are ungraspable through absolute and relative space, such as “the political role of collective memories in urban processes” or “what Tiananmen Square or ‘Ground Zero’ *mean*,” the Basilica or Sacré-Coeur in Paris, or indeed, Marxian political economy itself (Harvey 2006, 275). Harvey also uses a spatial frame to move toward “that most fraught of socio-political concepts”—identity (277). He argues that it is only in the relational frame

that we can start to grapple with many aspects of contemporary politics since that is the world of political subjectivity and political consciousness. Du Bois long ago attempted to address this in terms of what he called “double consciousness”—what does it mean, he asked, to carry within oneself the experience of being both black and American?” We now complicate the question further by asking what does it mean to be American, black, female, lesbian and working class? How do all those relationalities enter into the political consciousness of the subject? And when we consider other dimensions—of migrants, diasporic groups, tourists and travelers and those who watch the contemporary global media and partially filter or absorb its cacophony of messages—then the primary question we are faced with is understanding how this whole relational world of experience and information gets internalized within the particular political subjects (albeit individuated in absolute space and time) to support this or that line of thinking and of action? Plainly, *we cannot understand the shifting terrain upon which political subjectivities are formed and political actions occur without thinking about what happens in relational terms.* [277, Italics added]

Harvey goes on to expand and complicate his own analysis by combining his concepts of absolute, relative, and relational space with Lefebvre’s concepts of material space (experienced space), representations of space (conceptualized space), and spaces of representation (lived space). Using a chart, he then elaborates possible ideas, experiences, and aspects of material reality that could be understood in each of the potential intersections (see chart in Harvey 2006, 282-283). The value of this is that

thinking through the different ways in which space and space-time get used as keywords helps define certain conditions of possibility for critical engagement. It also opens up ways to identify conflicting claims and alternative political possibilities. It invites us to consider the ways we physically shape our environment and the ways in which we both represent and get to live in it. (286-287)

I find this strategy particularly useful in discussing the many possible theoretical and practical connections between feminist ideas, practice, and activism, and the material reality of planned and designed

spaces and objects. I do not exactly follow Harvey's analytical path here, but it is precisely these multiple uses of a spatial frame that make it valuable for exploring the intersections between spatial design, the design fields and professions, and feminism. One of the immediate challenges of a spatial frame is that even the nature of the boundaries of the two-dimensional frame, such as the one utilized in the tables in this paper, will vary according to the type of analysis one is conducting. A table is itself a spatial construct and the meaning and rigidity of the cells will vary depending on one's intended use of the table. In addition, the appropriate location for each concept in the set under consideration will depend on the others. Like Harvey, I periodically turn to tables, charts, and other graphic representations to depict the relationship of theories, methodologies, and analytic findings during this project. I use these concepts of space to form matrices that are not fixed schemes of meaning but rather flexible, movable frameworks for exploring the significance of ideas, events, objects, and even people in relation to each other.

Since the absolute, relative, and relational modes of space exist simultaneously and in relationship, the possibilities for confusion and misunderstanding multiply. If you look at a grid organized according to one spatial concept with expectations of seeing another, you will probably interpret what you see quite differently than the organizer of the grid intended you to: An absolutist view would see the concepts neatly contained in fixed, enclosed spaces that are unlikely to change, while relative and relational views would see the grid as a shifting structure (for relative analysis) or a completely malleable one (for relational analysis). Every time we move to "complicate" something, we are moving in the direction of a more relational mode of analysis, and the function of the containing structure shifts correspondingly. However, this is precisely the value of a spatial frame for analysis: it can help identify the sites in which theoretical and practical perspectives are aligned; the moments at which they diverge yet remain in dialogue with one another; and the deep ways in which they may turn out to be incommensurable with each other.

In several papers I wrote during my doctoral studies (Cahn 2007, 2009), I explored Harvey's spatial scheme as a framework for understanding and organizing (a) sex/gender concepts; (b) theories of intersectionality; (c) feminist planning theories; (d) feminist research methodologies; and (e) theories of practical intervention in planning (known as practice) and in feminist work (known as activism). Although some of these groups of ideas do not map simply or directly into Harvey's spatial organizational frame of

abstract, relative, and relational, in every case the effort was useful and helped me understand the ideas more deeply.

This lengthy exploration of theories and methodologies, particularly ones from the spatial design fields and feminism, has helped me identify approaches that support my interdisciplinary and intersectional project. The most useful ones are those that cluster in Harvey's category of "relational"—that is, they allow for multiple and changing positionalities and subjectivities. Many theories found in the design fields of architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design are of little use for this dissertation because they cluster in the category of abstract space and do not provide an entry for questions related to gender, difference, or identity-based approaches to the work of the profession or broader field. However, the field of planning, being bifurcated into technical and physical planning on one side and social planning on the other, does include theories that are relevant for this study. Planning as a field is more likely to address social factors relevant to clients and users and communicative and discourse-based processes for plan-making, which are sources of theories and methodologies that are useful for this research. In my review of feminist theories, I found many examples that occupy the relative and relational categories, since feminist theory in general was developed to critique and provide alternatives for conventional, and more abstract, philosophies and theories that do not acknowledge women or other "others."

For my dissertation research, I have culled from this broader exploration into a variety of fields a number of specific theories that (a) have helped me to choose appropriate research methodologies, especially ones that address feminist epistemologies and the positionality and subjectivity of the researcher (directly following in the Methodologies and Methods and Grounded Theory sections of this chapter); (b) provide a means of understanding the complex relationship of the various design fields and professions (in Chapter 3); (c) establish a framework for exploring the complexity of WSPA, its founders, and its effects (Chapters 4 and 5); and (d) elicit important themes and principles for the development of such spaces and projects (in Chapter 6). I will introduce and discuss these theories as I use them in the dissertation.

Methodologies and Methods

A methodology is an organized set of ideas about how to conduct research that explains the researcher's philosophical beliefs and underlying theories about the purpose of the research, specific goals

of the research enterprise, the techniques or methods used to carry it out, and an ethical stance about how the methods are used. Methodologies are broadly characterized as quantitative or qualitative. These terms describe ends of a spectrum of approaches that manifest differing philosophies and strategies for creating knowledge; research can also utilize “mixed methods,” or draw elements from both traditions.

Quantitative research methodologies typically utilize organizing concepts and categories that are bounded and more likely to be determined prior to gathering data, and that reduce complicated data to simpler categories. Quantitative research is more appropriate and useful when one already has an idea of ideas, frameworks, categories, or types that structure an understanding of the entities in question. Conversely, qualitative methodologies are more helpful when the concepts or frameworks for understanding benefit from a search for new ideas and concepts rather than limiting or quantifying in advance. In general, qualitative methodologies are most useful for research in which the research activity seeks new understandings, and for pursuing research questions that are exploratory and open ended.

Any research methodology needs to contain an explanation of how the ideas were developed and how the research was carried out so that another person can understand the process, even if another person cannot exactly replicate it. As with my choice of theories, my choice of methodologies and methods for this research must be related to the entities I am studying and the sources of data available. This means they must be useful for exploring issues of women, gender, and difference; applicable to design fields, professions, and practices; capable of addressing the positionality and subjectivity of the researcher; and appropriate for studying WSPA within both its immediate and historical contexts. Within this general area of interest, I wanted to understand the ideas, strategies, and experiences of the people involved in creating WSPA through their own words and their own documents and records. I wanted to “make sense” of a complicated process, and in the end, “tell a story” that others can understand and learn from. The WSPA data that existed before my study—material created by the founders and participants that sits in an archives—is best understood through qualitative methods, and the data that I wished to create through interviews with the living group of founders is also most appropriately studied through qualitative methods.

During the 1970s, a number of feminist-identified and women-only educational programs were created, including Califia (Bunch and Pollack 1983), Sagaris (Bunch and Pollack 1983), the Feminist Art Institute (Iskin 1983), The Feminist Art Program and Womanhouse (Shapiro 1979), and the Women’s

Building in Los Angeles (Lippard 1976, de Bretteville 1980), so WSPA was not alone in attempting to create feminist educational programming for an audience of women. However, WSPA was the only one of these programs that focused on the environmental design fields and the related professional disciplines of architecture and planning. As the sole explicitly feminist entity within these fields, WSPA lends itself to the research format of a case study utilizing feminist methodologies. I am more interested in exploring the specifics of its creation, brief existence, and role in critiquing the design fields and educational practices than I am in trying to compare it to any of the small number of other feminist educational entities that existed in the 1970s, or any larger group of utopian educational entities focusing on other issues. I do, however, locate it within the very small “class” of other independent, single-sex educational opportunities for women in architecture, landscape architecture, and planning in the United States, which included the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening, the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture, and the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, which are discussed in Chapter 3.

Feminist qualitative methodologies

For this study, I have worked within a general framework of feminist poststructural theories and methodologies. Feminist poststructural theories have developed from a variety of origins and emphasize different goals, but generally work to decenter singular modernist narratives by investigating topics of interest from multiple perspectives, addressing the gendered nature of language, attending to the relations of discourse and power, and utilizing feminist epistemologies—that is, how the knower comes to understand and interpret what is known (Fonow and Cook 2001, 2005; Naples 2003; Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004). A feminist poststructural approach provides a broad context that allows one to see multiple goals, discourses, and practices, rather than a single story with a singular outcome. These approaches have been particularly useful in studying complicated or contested topics such as social class, racial tension, family dynamics, violence, and marginalized communities (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004). These qualities are similar to those of Harvey’s spatial approach, and both approaches suit my research goals and research process. Since my study is intended to be exploratory, I have used feminist qualitative methodologies in my research process rather than quantitative methodologies of any sort.

My study of WSPA is a qualitative case study because I chose to look at WSPA as a single entity with the goal of understanding its creation, history, and dynamics in a detailed way. I began with some general ideas about what I wanted to know and questions I wanted to ask of the people who created it. I did not know what I would find and I did not want to limit my study to any pre-determined concepts or frames of reference. And I wanted to use a research process that allowed me to attend to my own personal experiences as a woman in the design fields and incorporate these into some sort of evaluative conclusions, even if I was not entirely clear how this part of my process would enter into my research and my writing.

Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser (2004) emphasize that feminists “bring a unique epistemological and methodological lens” (210) to the work of research. In feminist research, no one method is prioritized; instead, “epistemology, methodology, and method(s) interact to shape a “synergistic perspective” (210) making it possible for the researcher to ask new questions, remain open to the shifting focus of the research question, and respond to change. Feminist research is a process that need not be totally determined in advance, but can adjust itself to new information, ideas, and insights. These strategies recognize differences, intersectional effects, emotions, and lived experience, and make it possible for feminist research to be not just by women and about women, but *for* women.

Sandra Harding emphasized the philosophical connections between epistemology, methodology, and methods (Harding, in Naples 2003, 3). An *epistemology* is a set of beliefs that define the relationship between knower and known—that is, *who* can be a knower, *how* they know, and *what* can be known. Objectivist epistemologies assert that the knower is essentially invisible, that the process of knowledge formation is “neutral,” and that different observers can access the same underlying “truth” through the use of “valid” and “reliable” empirical methods.

Feminist epistemologies assert, in contrast, that the creation of knowledge is not simply a process of revealing some underlying or previously existing truth, but that knowledge appears different and is produced differently when accessed from different gender, social, and cultural positions. Therefore, the production of knowledge is not merely a matter of revealing some previously existing, coherent yet masked narrative, but is rather a process of discovery through the unique interaction of knower and known, which allows for creating new knowledge about *this* situation for *these* purposes.

Susan Geiger (2004) argued that specific research methods may not necessarily be feminist, but may be part of a feminist methodology when used for feminist objectives (400). My general method for investigating WSPA has been based on a qualitative case study utilizing analysis of documents in archives and interviews of the individuals who initially created this organization. Within this general approach I have implemented a reflective, self-reflexive, and synergistic feminist research process as described previously and in the next section on grounded theory. My process has incorporated a number of different specific methods but the specific feminist methodological linkages I constructed between these methods and my overall epistemological framework have shifted over time as the project developed and different issues came into focus.

The complexity of this project has required that I utilize different feminist analytic lenses to highlight different aspects of WSPA—the context in which WSPA was created; the different fields and professions involved; the intentions and identities of the founders and disparities between them; the events that occurred as seen from different perspectives; the gains and losses; and the longer-term legacies of WSPA, including how it is seen in hindsight by some of those who were involved in creating it.

These different analytical frames have built upon, supported, and sometimes contradicted each other. Instead of a single “straight” historical narrative or social science analysis, a feminist poststructuralist approach, using notions of space and in conjunction with grounded theory (see the final section of this chapter) has allowed me to produce a more complex story that illuminates the interaction of differing goals, identities, efforts, and outcomes. In the case of WSPA, rather than seeking merely comprehensive “factual” knowledge, I hoped to develop a better understanding of the set of discourses and practices that operate in the environmental design fields around sex, gender, and women, and the role of feminist critical and oppositional perspectives in changing the spatial design fields and professions of planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design.

My exploration of methodologies from a spatial perspective, following Harvey’s framework, helped me sort and classify feminist methodologies and identify several that are of particular value for this study. As in the case of theories, I am most interested in relational methodologies because they facilitate working with the complexity of the various elements of this project. Key methodologies that have influenced my research process are those based on standpoint theories and epistemologies (see next

section) as well as related concepts that allow for consideration of multiple, hybrid, and evolving points of view.

Standpoint theories and epistemologies

Standpoint theories and epistemologies focus on understanding the location, position, and/or identity from which someone creates knowledge (Hill Collins 1990, Harding 1991, Naples 1997, Sato 2004). Knowledge is not seen as “neutral” and the same from every position, as in traditional empiricism (and Harvey’s listing, abstract space), but is understood as being shaped by the views and interests of those who create it. Thus, knowledge is always partial and inflected by self-interest and one’s position in the system of power relations. Standpoint theories and epistemologies acknowledge multiple views and also validate the existence of critical and oppositional views, which from some perspectives might be minimized or ignored entirely. In a particular framework or context, an oppositional position, rather than being seen as merely marginal and to be ignored, actually establishes and defines a valid new aspect of reality.

Standpoint theory problematizes oppositional and marginalized positions by articulating the interaction between perspective, privilege, and standpoint. Perspective refers to the position one occupies in the world without benefit of reflection or understanding—what we might describe as how one experiences everyday existence from an egocentric point of view. An individual’s perspective is deeply affected by qualities such as gender, race, and class, whether or not one thinks about these qualities or is aware of their impact on power relations; that is, the advantages and disadvantages conferred by having or representing these qualities. Some of these qualities provide individuals and groups with greater resources and power and establish a system of privilege in which some people and groups have greater or lesser dominance over others as well as over the material conditions of daily life.

A standpoint is more than a position; a standpoint is created when someone with a particular perspective engages in critical reflection on that perspective in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of their own qualities and their place in the systems of power and privilege within which they live and act. In feminist epistemology, the notion of standpoint is used to establish the value of studying women’s experiences and views of the world. In the world of feminist standpoint theories and epistemologies, standpoint is used to articulate why and how women and other historically and culturally

marginalized groups have been excluded from knowledge production, and argue for the value of their positions.

Further, feminist standpoint epistemology, at times, asserts that members of marginalized groups can be *more* objective and have *greater* insight than members of the dominant group because their experiences of oppression provide them with knowledge of more aspects of the world—their own *and* that of the dominant group, which oppressed and marginalized groups must understand in order to survive. For example, Nancy Hartsock, a Marxist feminist philosopher, justified women’s research on other women by arguing “because of women’s location with the sexual division of labor and because of their experience of oppression, women have greater insights as researchers into the lives of other women” (Hartsock, in Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004, 15). I agree that simply occupying a different social position may provide a different and useful perspective but I would argue that this different position does not in itself produce knowledge. Instead, one must work to develop a standpoint from which to transform experience and perspective into useful knowledge of both self and others.

Standpoint epistemologies are extremely useful in my study of WSPA on many levels. In the historical and professional context of fields defined and dominated by white men, WSPA was clearly a manifestation of “oppositional consciousness” (Hill Collins 2000) carried out using a “separatist” mode of action (Sandoval 2000, 2). Standpoint theories and methodologies make it possible to understand WSPA as the expression of a valid oppositional standpoint that directly challenged hegemonic male control not only of planning and design processes, but of the educational practices through which planners, architects, and other designers gain knowledge, credentials, and credibility. The creation of WSPA was in itself an epistemological challenge to the professional norms of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning. It was not only explicitly feminist, it was a spatial intervention in the professional fields that claim for themselves the authority to imagine and create spatial interventions in the world. All WSPA programs were for women only, and this single-sex space was created to provide experiences that were otherwise simply not available in male-dominated fields.

An oppositional framework helps understand WSPA within the design professions, but does not serve to fully explain the internal workings of this feminist endeavor, or its evolution and final outcomes. While the seven founders of WSPA were aligned in their critique of architecture and planning, they also

brought a variety of different backgrounds, educations, identities, and ideas to this project. Their differing values and goals were reflected in many aspects of WSPA and contributed to many of the internal and external challenges encountered in their attempts to create a new and lasting feminist project. A detailed analysis of these women's efforts will "not only illuminate their specific historical struggles and location, but also more broadly the politics of resistance and accommodation by a privileged group of women seeking greater power and access to the professions" (Miliann Kang, personal communication 2006).

Elsewhere I critiqued the notion—central to standpoint theory and methodology—that marginalized groups incontrovertibly "know more" than dominant groups (Cahn, 2007). Marginalized and oppressed groups can indeed know more than dominant groups about some aspects of reality, but perhaps not about all aspects of the reality that is seen by dominant groups, including the inner workings of individual and group ideologies, values, experiences, and behaviors. Here, I am not arguing against feminist standpoint theory, which I feel has been appropriately used to decenter men's supposed knowledge of women, white women's supposed knowledge of women of color, and middle-class academic women's supposed knowledge of working class and poor women. But attention to issues of power and privilege in feminist theory may also function—at least at times—to marginalize attempts to create new knowledge by "studying up" or "studying across" to learn from those with greater rather than lesser amounts of social power and privilege.

Lack of attention to studying up and across may obscure some important aspects of women's experiences and hide useful knowledge, particularly around access and subjectivity. If part of social privilege consists of the power to control who has access to individuals and groups, it's possible that only those with (relatively) greater social privilege actually have access to certain research sites. And in the face of significant variability in subjectivities—the internal cognitive and emotional aspects of human experience—there may be situations in which researchers who share multiple aspects of identity and subjectivity with those they are researching actually have the opportunity to gain more information from them, no matter their position in the system of privilege (Sato 2004, Weston 2004). Power relations can obscure knowledge but also shape access to knowledge in a variety of sometimes subtle ways. In the interest of developing more nuanced and particularized forms of feminist knowledge, I believe it is

important not to reject knowledge-producing opportunities, sites, and methods just because they are associated with individuals who hold greater social power and privilege.

These questions are relevant to my project because my research on WSPA is characterized by many similarities between me and the women I am studying. In this case, my identity as a white, middle/upper middle-class woman has served my project in at least two ways: in gaining access to the WSPA community (both the people and the archival materials), and enabling me to understand some aspects of the white, middle-class subjectivities of the women of WSPA, subjectivities which inevitably had consequences for their ideas, goals, and actions. Beyond these basic similarities, I share other relevant qualities with those who created WSPA, including education and professional experience in the fields of planning, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and design education. My similarities to the women who created WSPA, and perhaps even to other women at other times who sought education in the design fields and planning, has provided me with access and understanding of their motivations and concerns. I am equally certain it has also obscured issues that may be seen more readily by others who occupy a different position and standpoint.

At the same time, the qualities that I share with the founders of WSPA served only as my initial perspective and are not sufficient for a full understanding of my topic or the informants I interviewed. An important part of my study was the ongoing process of reflecting on my role and position in relation to these women and what they accomplished as I moved through my research, analysis, and writing process. My observations and conclusions as a feminist researcher were and are shaped by these aspects of my historically situated self. Issues that arose included similarities in professional goals, education, and feminist ideology as well as differences in those same factors. Most of the time, I felt completely welcomed and supported by the people I spoke with about WSPA. I felt both envious of their opportunity to work with each other on this project and yet also glad to be at least half a generation behind them and slightly shielded from some of the challenges they faced. At other times, I wondered if I was somehow viewed as a competitor or threat. Although I can neither change my positionality nor some aspects of my identity, I endeavored to intentionally consider the effects of these on my research process and the outcome as it evolved so far. I will explore these issues in more detail at appropriate points in my analysis and conclusion.

Multidimensional standpoint methodology

Standpoint theory has been criticized for overly valuing and essentializing notions of fixed identity represented by both the person and the social location from which a particular standpoint is generated. Nancy Naples has accommodated this critique by developing the idea of multidimensional standpoint methodology, a form of ethnography that further explores the notion of standpoint “first, as embodied in experiences of both the researcher and the researched; second, as located and constructed in ongoing relationships in communities; and third, as a methodological strategy, namely, a site through which to begin inquiry” (Naples 2003, 8). Although my project is not an ethnography, I found Naples’s notion of multidimensional standpoint methodology a useful one in approaching the history of WSPA due to the many individuals who were involved in it during its eight-year active existence, the multiple sources of information I accessed in my research, and even the multiple time periods these different sources of information represent, from which I have attempted to understand the importance of WSPA.

A multidimensional standpoint methodology is useful for accessing and understanding multiple viewpoints within a particular oppositional discourse such as the one promoted by WSPA. It also helped me understand the participants’ relationships to WSPA over time and my own relationship to the project and the women whose work I have researched. I relate to these women as individuals like myself and as former participants in WSPA, a feminist project that had goals with which I am extremely sympathetic. But multidimensional standpoint methodology helped me form other questions related to this research, such as: What is the community of this project? Who am I in this community? In what ways am I inside this community and in what ways am I outside it? What do I have to offer to participants? How are all of the participants—past and present—part of a broader community of professionals and women marked by similarities, differences, and power imbalances? And within this community, how are we still enacting our individual values, goals, and identities? In many ways, we are alike and I am “studying across,” but I must also recognize and negotiate differences—both known and as-yet-unknown—that only reveal themselves over time.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that prioritizes use of organizing ideas that are “grounded” in whatever is being researched by being developed through the research process as it develops. Rather than bringing a set of predetermined categories, questions, or strategies to the data, grounded theory (also called “immersion-induction”) is based on the researcher’s practice of collecting and attending to the data using a wide variety of tools and processes, both inductive and deductive. Grounded theory may be based on a number of different ontological and epistemological foundations, and data may be collected and analyzed using any methods, but the goal is to discover the most significant themes and principles in what is being studied by engaging with all elements of the research process in multiple, repetitive ways that evolve in a creative way as the study proceeds. The primary activities of grounded theory include collecting and sorting data, coding, writing memos, and creating organizational schemes that move the content of memos to a broader or more global explanatory position about the data (Charmaz 2006, Corbin and Strauss 2008, Saldaña 2009).

Grounded theory is well-suited for studies of complex situations involving multiple points of view such as nursing (Chenitz and Swanson 1986), coping with chronic illness (Corbin and Strauss 1988, Charmaz 1990), and has been used for studying a wide variety of other topics in social science and applied science fields. This approach is particularly useful for my dissertation research as it prioritizes the search for meaning within the project and within the data rather than imposing predetermined ideas, categories, or significance from outside. Grounded theory allows for mixed and hybrid theories, methodologies, and methods as well as many ways of incorporating the perspective of a number of different participants as well as the researcher in the process. Grounded theory has diverse intellectual roots and allows for a wide variety of exploratory research practices, so it facilitates my need in this project to weave together multiple strands of philosophy and theory, history and criticism, analysis and synthesis, research and lived experience. Grounded theory is also appropriate for beginning with a single case, as this study did, and allowing broader questions to evolve over time.

Using grounded theory as a research methodology for this case study of WSPA is particularly appropriate because this approach to research resonates strongly with the strategies of design that are typically taught to students of design. Design and the design process, which are primarily carried out

through visual and spatial methods rather than written language, are theorized, described, and studied using alternate terminologies such as Schön's notion of reflective practice (1983), Groat and Wang's system of applying positivist, naturalistic, and emancipatory research paradigms to design research (2001), and other, more popularized terminology such as "design thinking" and "maker culture." The "steps" in the development of grounded theory—collecting, sorting, coding, writing, and revising—run parallel to the phases of the design process, which follow a similar iterative sequence of research, analysis, diagramming, designing, critiquing, and revising until the result incorporates all the relevant information that the researcher/designer has discovered. While I have found only a few examples of design studies explicitly based on grounded theory (Fakhra and Gregory 2010, Sattrup 2014), another reason grounded theory is appropriate for my research is that a number of concepts used in the spatial design fields are roughly equivalent to the notions of constructivist research, iterative learning, and the continuous comparative process that characterize grounded theory. I think that one of the reasons grounded theory made so much sense to me as a methodology for this study is that in many fundamental ways it mirrors the methodology of design process that I was taught long ago in my undergraduate architecture education.

Organizing disparate theories and methodologies

In addition to using grounded theory for analysis of the original sources related to WSPA that I studied, drawing on grounded theory has provided other ways to bring interdisciplinary and intersectional thinking to this study. Since my goal is to untangle complex ideologies and motivations—not with the idea of "explaining" them, but rather to "complicate" them in an instructive way. Grounded theory provides a conceptual frame and rationale for this portion of my long-term work, which is to organize and understand the relationships between a group of theories and methodologies, of disparate origins, that have provided some insight or inspiration in my exploration of the fields of planning, architecture, and gender studies. The ideas of grounded theory also helped me identify additional critical frameworks for addressing interdisciplinary and intersectional elements of WSPA and of my overall project. Grounded theory has functioned as a container in which I have "corralled" related ideas, frameworks, and research practices that have been useful at various points in the research, analysis, and writing of this dissertation.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed Harvey's concepts of abstract, relative, and relational space as a philosophical basis for this dissertation and described some insights from a working paper in which I used Harvey's framework to investigate theories and methodologies drawn from both planning and feminist studies (Cahn 2007). This was an awkward exercise in some ways, but parallels work by other feminist planners (Sandercock 1992a, 1992b; Snyder 1995; Rahder and Altilia 2004). The process helped me clarify approaches useful for specific intellectual purposes and projects when trying to bring feminist insights into planning, or planning insights into feminism. While this paper focused on theories of planning rather than theories of the other design fields of architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design, many of the themes I discovered were salient for my studies of WSPA within this broader context.

Both planning and feminist studies have theories and methodologies that occupy the three spatial realms described by Harvey, although my analysis disclosed that theories and methodologies of feminism are more likely to operate in the relative and relational zones, while theories and methodologies of planning are more likely to occupy the abstract and relative zones. This may, in part, be due to planning's identity as a profession in which a designated and trained "planner" is presumed to know more than others who may be involved in a planning scenario.

Resistance to feminist thought in the professions is due to the nature of the professions themselves, which have a vested interest in maintaining boundaries between specified areas of knowledge and their concomitant areas of action. These boundaries need to be maintained, defended from outside threats, and if possible expanded. To be a professional entails the notion of practice, defined as the actions that one carries out as a member of a specific professional group. Planning is somewhat less legally bounded than other professions, which may be part of why planning has been somewhat more open to feminist thought than other professions, at least among the spatial design fields. Writers on feminist epistemologies in planning suggest an increased role for "emancipatory planning practice," in which citizen participation helps undermine the role of planner as expert, but this is not how things happen on the ground much of the time (Liggett 1992, Snyder 1995, Groat and Wang 2001).

Feminist projects may also be carried out by those who feel they have specialized and superior knowledge, but this impulse has been somewhat balanced in feminist work by emphasis on the commonalities between women as members of an oppressed group and the notion of "sisterhood" as a bond

between women who might otherwise have little in common. At the same time, I observed a level of resistance to professional knowledge and practice in theoretical feminism, perhaps because applied knowledge is seen as male-generated and masculinist, as practical and therefore “less than” academic knowledge, or as simply irrelevant to the concerns of women and feminists. I believe these attitudes result in a variety of blind spots and hope my work will go some way toward creating new and useful knowledge in the gap between these disparate approaches to knowledge creation and creative projects in the fields encompassed by this dissertation.

Table 1 lays out my current system for organizing the relational theories and methodologies I explored in my earlier unpublished papers, both in relation to each other and to more conventional approaches to research, analysis, and practice (Cahn 2006, 2007, 2009). Part of the challenge of developing this table has determining why I located certain ideas in certain locations. One of the difficulties of this task is that, in a relational view of the world, relational theories and methodologies do not all start in the same place or address the same concerns; nor are they “nested” within each other in some hierarchical way. Even within a group of approaches that share similarities, they are generated by slightly different starting points and point toward slightly different outcomes. This organizational process was useful in identifying the subtle differences among a group of similar theories and methodologies, which may not be apparent when they are compared to a wider variety of approaches. This current chart shows what makes sense to *me*, based on my starting point. Others might organize this group of theories and methodologies differently, which would manifest a different underlying set of choices, neither right nor wrong.

My organizational scheme, which is still evolving as I write, emerged as I sorted and moved items from location to location. It is based on themes within the theories and methodologies that express what I can best describe as a spatially oriented “psychological-mindedness”; that is, looking beneath the surface of approaches to discern the underlying motivations and uses. By “spatially oriented,” I mean space as I discussed earlier in this chapter, ranging from the three-dimensional space of geography and planning to the multiple and shifting spaces of philosophy, literature, and identity. Some of these theories directly incorporate a concept of space in the way they are named, such as Soja’s “thirdspace” (1996) and Anzaldúa’s “borderlands” (1987); others invoke a sense of movement through space or spaces, such as Lugones’s “world-traveling” (1987) and de Certeau’s notion of strategy vs. tactics, which he describes by a

quite literal traveling in his essay “Walking in the City” (1984). I also discern differences among these theories and methodologies in terms of how “far” or “close” they situate the observer to what is observed, which ranges from “distant” or “big picture” overview to “close up” or “detail” focus.

As I worked with the table and considered each theory or methodology in relation to the others, the following categories evolved: the rows, on the left, from top to bottom, lay out Harvey’s categories of abstract, relative, and relational, followed by a row that provides space for my own concept of a hybrid/bridge practice. The columns, moving from left to right, are organized as follows: first, theories and methodologies that privilege ideas of big picture or structural framework; then ones that focus on group and individual identity; then ones that highlight subjectivity or identity-in-action, which shape a researcher’s roles and responsibilities (i.e., ethics); and finally, those that stress an ideal form of action or praxis, which develops out of the structural, identity, and ethics realms.

And why bother? Because the theories and methodologies are more useful, I believe, if I understand them on a more subtle level and can move more fluidly among them when making choices for my project, whether I am deciding how to approach the study of a complex topic, analyzing the motivations and actions of the founders of WSPA, or eliciting recommendations for the future from various portions of the study. Making this table has served as an exercise in identifying these different foci and directions of influence and will, I hope, provide a map for future exploration of these theories in teaching, research, and “use in action” (Schön 1983, 1987). At the end of working through this matrix, I began to feel that the lower right corner—a hybrid/bridge practice that focuses on forms of intentional action (activism and/or practice) might be an appropriate home for Feyerabend’s philosophy of “anything goes” (1975). For me, however, this form of “anything goes,” while perhaps not “disciplined” in a conventional sense, is based on a developmental process of working through and practicing multiple approaches that are based on multiple epistemologies and methodologies so that decisions made at a particular time, for a particular purpose, are “grounded” in practical knowledge and previous experience as well as intellectual ideas.

Data Analysis

Although grounded theory is open to a wide variety of approaches and use of specific research methodologies and methods, typical data analysis methods in grounded theory include gathering rich data,

coding, memo writing, sampling, and sorting in order to extract the “deep structure” of what is being studied (Charmaz 2006). These various ways of finding meaning resonate deeply with the visual and spatial strategies for analyzing information, organizing it, and developing a designed product; strategies that I learned in architecture training, and that I described in Chapter 1, where I discussed the process I went through to find organizational schemes for this document as a whole. Grounded theory methods and my specific approach to using them for this research are elaborated in more detail in Appendix A.

Limitations

Because grounded theory is a methodology that draws conceptual frameworks out of the matrix of each particular study, it is not useful for extracting easily replicable or comparable conclusions. This is not particularly problematic for my research, which is intended to be exploratory and “question seeking,” rather than conclusive and “answer finding.” Another challenge of using grounded theory, more relevant for this study, is the complexity of the emergent inductive process, which asks the researcher to tolerate a high amount of uncertainty throughout the work. I was pleased when I came across John Lofland’s point that “Feelings of anxiety and difficulty in the face of such open-ended tasks are common and normal” (Lofland 1990, 91). This statement did not, of course, eliminate my anxiety, but helped me carry on in the face of it.

Use of “project” frame

Finally, an additional framework that is helpful for me in understanding WSPA as a feminist educational program is the notion of “project.” Much of the literature on women’s organization building uses the term “institution” to describe the programs and services created by feminist groups to help themselves and other women. An institution, according to standard definitions, is basically “an establishment, organization, or association, instituted for the promotion of some object, esp. one of public or general utility, religious, charitable, educational, etc., e.g. a church, school, college, hospital, asylum, reformatory, mission, or the like” (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “institution,” accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.oed.com>). To the extent that WSPA identified itself as a school, it seemed reasonable to begin my research using this word, but eventually I became uncomfortable with the notion of “institution” to describe WSPA. Although many of the founders’ original goals contained language that implied a wish

to create something long-lasting, they never used this term when they wrote or talked about their efforts and accomplishments, and I was reluctant to impose the concept on it or them.

Despite the founders' intention to create new networks of women, it seemed that WSPA was not an attempt to create a long-lasting organization with a consistent mission and formal structures or programming. Rather, like many women's endeavors of its era, it was a time-limited effort meant to fulfill the needs of the participants only as long as the participants felt the need for them.

In my research and writing about women's feminist activism, I observed that many significant feminist efforts had an ebb and flow of energy, enthusiasm, and effects, which I came to think of as "project as a practice" and discussed in another working paper (Cahn 2009). In that paper I explored the concept of "project" in design practice, which melds the noun and verb meanings of project, both derived from the Latin *projectus*, the past participle of *pojcere*, "to throw forward" (*Merriam-Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 9th ed., s.v. "project"). This concept combines the idea of a project as a particular designed or planned endeavor with the psychological notion of project, or throwing an idea or image forward into the future. The founders of WSPA, no doubt familiar with the idea of professional projects with goals and limits, also projected their ideas about what WSPA could be into the future, and then worked to make it a reality. So my use of the term "project" is a hybrid move; I use it to honor what WSPA seemed to be, while acknowledging that it was never described as a project by others, only by me.

In addition to the notion of "project" being useful to describe WSPA, I have also found it helpful in conceptualizing the form and limits of this dissertation. My approach to this research is to conceive of this work as a "project," within the "project as a practice" notion of activism. This attitude toward my research allows it to respond to a variety of theoretical and practical factors constructed from one person's point of view as it has evolved over time, and that manifests a set of ideas in a particular form as needed at the time. The notion of "project" allows for multiple and hybrid theories, methodologies, and methods, and helps me tolerate the challenges created by the broad reach of this project and its inevitable limitations. The dissertation, too, is a project, and when completed, it can evolve into whatever form it needs to become next in the queue of possible manifestations of these ideas.

Project Space(s)

In this chapter, I have described the theories and methodologies that have been useful to this dissertation and placed them in the context of conventional rationalist research strategies and techniques. My work here relies not on any one idea or approach determined in advance, but on my ability to forge a new path that serves the needs of this project as it has evolved over time. Important to my project are 1) an interdisciplinary approach to the various fields and professions within which WSPA was created, in both its immediate and longer-term historical frame; 2) an intersectional analysis of the participants and concerns involved in these fields and with WSPA; 3) a broad approach to identifying and using theories and methodologies to approach the project, including sources from planning and design, feminist studies and activism, and grounded theory; and 4) understanding of both WSPA and this dissertation as “projects” within evolving, longer-term efforts to shift the framing and discussion of difference and power in the design fields. These qualities locate my study within a legacy of “emancipatory planning practice” (Liggett 1992, Snyder 1995, Groat and Wang 2001), but also link this type of work to related design fields and educational practices.

The professional activities of the various fields related to spatial design affect the physical environment in which humans live and assert an important role in shaping human society, perhaps more than what they realistically can claim. I argue in this dissertation that the development of these fields as professions has systematically, even if not intentionally, worked to exclude both motivated participants and relevant ideas. WSPA was a project developed by its founders to create opportunities to teach, explore, and discuss some of the ideas and engage some of the participants typically excluded from the spatial design fields and professions.

I believe that multiple theoretical and methodological frames are needed to fully understand the context in which WSPA was created, the critiques that generated it, the people who were involved with it, and its significance. No single existing framework for analysis captures its “caseness” long enough to learn from it. I believe this is, at least in part, why WSPA is so little known, as its interdisciplinary nature causes it to fall into the very large cracks between established areas of investigation. From the side of architecture, planning, and other design fields, it is “too feminist,” and too much focused on social and identity factors rather than technology and “pure” design, while from the perspective of women’s studies and feminist

activism, it was “too professional,” focused on a notion of space that was practical rather than conceptual, and engaged a privileged group of women already engaged in a masculinized field and practice.

The notion of “interdisciplinary” for this project refers not only to the multiple professional fields and disciplines I explore, but also to the various ways in which this study moves counter to the definitions and boundaries established by the “disciplining” of the design professions. By being willing to move across disciplinary boundaries, this study is challenged by a loss of clear limits and established procedures. At the same time, it benefits from the potential for utilizing interdisciplinary approaches that allow for creativity and productivity outside of conventional boundaries.

By prioritizing intersectionality in my research, I am able to address qualities usually not included in design research and practice. These qualities include categories of gender, race, ethnicity, social and economic class, as well as personal identity, positionality, and subjectivity. My choice of an intersectional feminist analysis is a response to WSPA’s explicit feminist project, and it enables me to look at WSPA’s goals and consequences for women and also how these affected other marginalized groups in the design fields. A feminist methodology also allows me to work on the level of epistemology—to ask who creates knowledge, and for what purposes.

Grounded theory creates space for using multiple theories and methodologies and for using a relational mode of analysis to explore them in relation to each other. By discussing theories and methodologies from disparate fields together, I am able to find linkages and relationships that would not be seen if the usual boundaries and limitations were respected. Table 1, as a work-in-progress, has helped me organize ideas I have used in this project from both planning and feminist studies. These various ideas provide useful models and approaches for feminist research in that they move beyond—and in some cases far beyond—conventional, rationalist, paradigm-based, forms of research. Creating Table 1 enabled me to explore a group of theories and methodologies from disparate fields that manifest related philosophical underpinnings. Exploring them in this way has helped me discover some more subtle underlying qualities, which has been useful for the dissertation and will facilitate making choices among them for future projects.

Finally, all of these approaches together are necessary for me to assess WSPA in its historic and contemporary context and to locate my experiences and observations in relation to it. My lived experience

in the fields and professions of design and planning, and in women's studies and feminist activism, is a kind of "sitting with" the sources and elements of this study that contributes to the accuracy and depth of my understanding of WSPA. Theories, methodologies, and methods are only as trustworthy as the person choosing and using them, and I believe that this lengthy "stewing" in theories and methodologies, as well as my long apprenticeship in various fields related to WSPA, will substantiate new insights and new ways of understanding the process of knowledge creation and new insights about women, gender, difference, power, and the planning and design of human environments. This lengthy research process has also helped me come to recognize my research not as an effort to study something "out there" or "in the past," but as part of an ongoing process. This dissertation is not "about" something that is "over." WSPA still exists as long as we remember it, think about it, and discuss it. My actions as a researcher and the writing of this dissertation are meaningful interventions in the history of WSPA and an intentional carrying on of its legacy.

Table 1: Epistemologies, Theories, and Methodologies

type of space	researcher positionality	researcher consciousness / identity	researcher role and responsibility / ethics	action / praxis
	--framework --system / context	--identity --group belonging	--subjectivity --identity-in-action	--idealized form of goal-directed action
absolute space <i>hierarchical intersectionality of universalizing categories</i>	--unconscious egotism --"perspective"	--essentialism --fixed, non-overlapping categories --legitimizing identity (Castells 1977)	--expert --"power over"	--conventional goals and strategies, e.g., "master" planning
relative space <i>additive intersectionality of known and knowable categories</i>	--evolved self- conscious "standpoint" and "strong objectivity" (Harding 1991)	--oppositional consciousness (Hill Collins 1990) --resistance identity (Castells 1977) --separatist mode of action (Sandoval 2000)	--"studying up" and "studying down"; e.g., conscious of expert role and power dynamics (Naples 2003) --"reflective practice" (Schön 1983) --some communicative planning (Healey 1992, Innes 1995) --advocacy planning (Davidoff 1965) --equity planning (Krumholtz 1983)	--struggle for co-existence --bricolage (Levi- Strauss 1966[1962]) --separatist mode of action (Sandoval 2000) --syncretic approach of praxis (Ahrentzen 2003)
relational space <i>constitutive intersectionality of evolving, overlapping, and imperfectly knowable categories</i>	--multidimensional standpoint theory (Naples 2003) --borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987)	--"mestiza" consciousness (Anzaldúa 1987) --"metis" (Scott 1998) --thirdspace (Soja 1996) --"world-traveling" (Lugones 1987) --project identity (Castells 1977) --experience mediated by self-consciousness (Stone-Mediatore 1998)	--bridge identities (Ferguson 1997) --forms of power are variable --some communicative planning (Healey 1992, Innes 1995)	--use multiple kinds of power --strategies and tactics (de Certeau 1984) --mongrel practice (Sandercock 2003) --"thinking through skins" (Sullivan 2001) --intercultural relations (Rahder and Milgrom 2004)
hybrid/bridge practice (Cahn 2007, 2009)	--strategically chosen based on goals?	--subjectivity as a more fluid aspect of identity + consciousness + time --translational among relevant audiences?	--translation vs interpretation --participatory action research?	--project-based analysis, activism, and practice? or -- <i>anything goes?</i> (Feyerabend 1975) -- BUT only after one has journeyed through all other positions *

*Project-based decisions are possible once you have developed a repertoire of possible actions; then you can go back to "gut" or "feeling" in the moment as a basis for decision making processes that incorporate and trust both rational and non-rational inputs such as instinct, intuition, rumination, serendipity, and accident.

CHAPTER 3

A LONG VIEW BACK

Introduction

This chapter serves two tasks within the dissertation: first, it sketches out the broad historical framework I believe is essential to understanding women's education for design and planning in the United States; and second, it focuses on the conditions that set the stage for the creation of WSPA in 1974. In constructing this historical narrative, I am drawing together threads from multiple fields and design disciplines to construct a loose fabric, but sufficient to structure this analysis and form a foundation for future elaborations.

The role of women and minorities and the salience of gender or sexuality in architecture, planning, landscape architecture, and interior design cannot be fully understood without looking at all the fields together, analyzing their historical development, assessing the participants, and looking at the changing context of all of these factors over time. Access by potential designers and planners to training and education, resources to overcome the hurdles involved in professional licensing, participation in social networks that generate clients, and ability to find gainful employment or develop a sustainable business are all dependent on social roles and opportunities that vary by gender, race, class, sexuality, and other group memberships and identities, and are significantly shaped by factors that have changed over time, both in these fields and in the broader society.

In the United States in the 1860s, the spatial design professions we know today—characterized by areas of special expertise, post-secondary educational programs, and governmental licensing and regulation—were just beginning to form themselves. Creation of professional organizations was the first step in the development of a complicated framework of education and credentialing requirements that continues to the present day. It took more than sixty years for each of the spatial design fields that exists today to establish its own professional organization: In 1857, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) was the first to be established; the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) followed next in 1899; the American City Planning Institute, which eventually evolved into the American Planning Association (APA), was founded in 1917 (although it now claims the First National Conference on City

Planning in 1909 as its “birthday”); and the first of several interior design organizations was created in 1931.

During the century and a half since this process began, women have endeavored to develop their knowledge and skills in design through the same systems and in the same settings that were created by and for men, beginning with apprenticeship and continuing into formal educational programs. When these opportunities were closed to them or difficult to enter, women created options for themselves, which have, like much of women’s design work in these fields, also been forgotten.

The late 1960s US civil rights movement and early 1970s women’s movement were essential catalysts for the creation of WSPA, but similar conditions favoring increased opportunities for women had occurred before. A longer perspective shows that WSPA was in part new and of its own historical moment, and in part a continuation of prior efforts and struggles to shape the design fields and professions, create educational spaces for women, and work toward creating new roles for women in imagining and producing the designed environment.

This chapter establishes a historical context for understanding education for women in the design fields and professions, and places WSPA within that longer trajectory. WSPA followed a track established by the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening, the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women, and the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, all independent institutions that provided professional education in design for women when their opportunities to attend colleges and universities were few and access to these institutions compromised. A number of schools for women had offered industrial design education beginning as early as 1848 (Allaback 1998).

Parsing Design Professions

Professions are groups composed of individuals trained to perform a specialized activity or role within society who take on the responsibility of educating their members, developing and implementing codes of ethics, and managing their members’ behavior. The development of specialized knowledge and skills leads to the division of labor and economic exchange of that labor and its products in guilds and guild-like organizations that control the development of practitioners and regulate their work through both supports and sanctions. The modern concept of the profession replicates the guild in both positive and

negative ways: the profession defines and provides a means of learning specialized skills and earning an income from those skills; it takes responsibility for developing and enforcing rules about the behavior of those who ply that trade or skill; and it also, at the same time, establishes regulations that direct work to members and have the effect of excluding, overtly or covertly, irregular or otherwise unwanted practitioners. Modern professions and professional identities are shaped through a group of related and synergistic activities that usually include the creation of membership organizations, establishment of educational programs as a pathway to membership, and maintenance of varying forms of credentialing and licensing. These organizations serve to structure a set of norms and behaviors within a field that, while justified in part by the purpose of protecting the public interest, also establish a set of norms and behaviors that have significant consequences for professional membership and participation.

Design Professions

Like many other areas of work such as medicine and law, the activities of spatial design have also been strongly shaped and defined through their efforts to create professions and professional identities. The history and development of the design professions is important to this study for several reasons: Design professions are, for the most part, structured by concepts of the division of labor, specialization, and selling of services to wealthy and elite groups that have limited the participation of women in many of these roles. These professions often provide services that are simply not applicable or available to most people who lack the social status and economic resources to hire trained, specialized workers of this kind. The education and credentialing processes central to the development and protection of professional skills usually exclude participants who do not have the time or money to enter these fields even if they have the interest or skill, and mitigate against the participation of “irregular practitioners,” who cannot complete eligibility requirements in a timely manner, who cannot or do not work full-time or make enough money to pay the necessary membership fees, or who wish to provide design services in alternative ways.

As part of the job of directing work to its members and eliminating other practitioners, design professions create narratives that reify the approved participants and minimize the contributions of others. These narratives do not actually eliminate that “outsider” work, although they usually make it more difficult to collect information and weave an alternative narrative, histories, or practices together. The

standards that control educational pathways into a profession can have the effect of discouraging practitioners-in-training from considering alternative ways to conduct work and serve clients. For example, in professional design education, “professional practice” courses typically address issues such as how to run a successful business in that field, find work, relate to clients and subcontractors, handle contracts and other documents, and manage business ethics. These efforts have value for practitioners and clients, but tend to reinforce professional boundaries, not critique them. Despite the efforts of professions to establish clear boundaries and delimitations around types of work included or excluded, as well as those who can carry out that work, distinct separations between fields or those practicing within them, are not obvious or agreed upon. These edges also shift over time as fields evolve, compete with each other, and gain or lose economic power and social status.

These dynamics can be seen by looking at the spatial design professions together and in relation to each other. As part of my investigation of design professions, I compiled information to facilitate my analysis of the major organizations, educational programs, and credentialing systems in architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and interior design (See Table 2). I expanded the table to include civil engineering, which began to organize itself as a field prior to the time period in which architecture began moving in this direction. I eventually added a number of related organizations and affinity groups to help understand the development of organized groups that share a different perspective on the activities of spatial design. I compiled this information as well as I could from easily accessible data such as professional organization websites and other Internet information sources. The information in Table 2 illuminates some interesting similarities and differences between the four spatial design professions of architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and interior design, and I will refer to it periodically throughout this study.

Organizations

By the mid-nineteenth century in the United States, architects began attempting to carve out an arena of practice somewhere between engineering and the building trades. Engineering as a specialized, self-conscious field had developed as a concern of the military in Europe. Civil engineering was differentiated from military engineering in the eighteenth century, but the term “civil” only distinguished

non-military projects from military ones; there was as yet no mention of buildings. The first professional engineering organization in Europe was the Smeatonian Society of Civil Engineers, established in London in 1771. Education specifically for engineering began in the United States in the early nineteenth century at Norwich University in Vermont, and the first degree in civil engineering was awarded in 1835 by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. The first licensure law for engineering was enacted in Wyoming in 1907, followed by Louisiana in 1908, and a model licensing statute was produced by the American Society of Civil Engineers in 1910. The National Council of State Boards of Engineering Examiners was created in 1920 (now the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying). Additional engineering organizations were created to address issues of professional development (1932) and accreditation of engineering curricula (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, created in 1936).

Architecture

Architecture, as the work of “master builders,” has existed for centuries. In architecture, as in many fields, the idea of creating organizations to promote the interests of practitioners arose in multiple places around the same time. In the United States there were two such organizations: The AIA and the Western Association of Architecture (WAA). Thirteen men in New York City formed the AIA in 1857. Their goals were to establish an architecture organization that would “promote the scientific and practical perfection of its members,” “promote the artistic, scientific, and practical efficiency of the profession,” and “elevate the standing of the profession.” This group was also invested in distinguishing architecture from building by controlling the work of builders. To initiate this process, the AIA’s first goal was to standardize construction documents used by the construction industry. The first document they created was a fee schedule, adopted in 1866, which also defined “who an architect was and what an architect did.” (AIA describes the need for this document as “urgent.”) The second significant document, adopted in 1870, was one that “ensured that architects would be involved in planning, overseeing, and judging competitions for building design.” These documents and standards were the beginning of the standardized documents that are still in use today (About the AIA, History).

In 1884, the WAA, a rival organization to the AIA, was formed by a group of prominent architects in Chicago (also all men) and included architects in the Midwest and South. The WAA was the first

architecture organization to propose the idea of licensing as a system of regulating practitioners in this field. In 1889 these two groups merged and decided to continue the push toward licensure (About the AIA, History). In 1897, the state of Illinois became the first state to adopt an architectural licensing law establishing legal requirements for using the title of architect or providing architectural services. Eventually all states adopted such laws, although it took more than fifty years to accomplish this nationwide, and details of the criteria and process still vary from state to state. At the same time, efforts to create an ideological separation between “architecture” of the public sphere and the lower status realm of the domestic “house” and “housing” started early; an editorial in the very first issue of *The American Architect and Building News* 1:1 (September 30, 1876) opined that “the planning of houses is not architecture” (Berkeley 1980, 205).

Over the next century architecture aligned itself with the burgeoning number of architectural education programs at universities and colleges, pursued licensing in all fifty states, and created a series of what are now called “collateral” organizations to manage professional practice, professional education, and to a large extent, professional identity. Many architects do not belong to the AIA, but if registered are governed by state registration boards, which serve similar behavior management and identity-forming purposes. In addition to the AIA, the national organization for professional architects, there are associated organizations for architecture students (AIAS), for boards of registration (NCARB), to manage accreditation of educational programs (NAAB), and for architectural educators (ACSA). ACSA publishes a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, *The Journal of Architectural Education* (JAE). A research consortium (ARCC) comprising about sixty research centers at universities is associated with this large cluster of professional architecture organizations. A national exam (the Architectural Registration Exam or ARE) must be passed to become a licensed architect, and eligibility to take the exam is linked to a fee-based program that supervises architectural interns (IDP) (interns are those who have gained an accredited degree and are accumulating experience towards registration). Degreed and licensed architects are not free from further engagement with organizations that manage and document skills, as most must complete continuing education requirements, which are administered by both national and state-level organizations.

Landscape Architecture

In the United States, landscape architecture was the next design field after architecture to organize itself as a profession. According to the ASLA, the term "landscape architecture" was invented by a Scottish man, Gilbert Laing Meason in 1828 and was first used as a professional title by Frederick Law Olmsted in the United States in 1863. ASLA was founded in 1899 by a group of eleven individuals, ten men and one woman, Beatrix Farrand. Like architects, landscape architects expended considerable effort to distinguish the activities of the profession—parks, institutions, and large estates—from the domestic realm of houses and gardens and the work of horticulturalists, plant specialists, and those who gardened for themselves. Over the next century landscape architecture followed the model of the AIA and its collateral organizations in developing a system of organizations.

In 1909, when ASLA was ten years old, it created a standing Committee on Education “for the purpose of giving continuity, developing standards, recommending policy and keeping records” (Knight 1986, 22). In 1915, it created a Rome Prize in Landscape Architecture and recognized schools with high-quality programs by admitting their students into competition for the prize. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Committee on Education began to discuss minimum standards and the ideal curriculum in landscape architecture, and in 1938 accreditation of schools was discussed for the first time. Several collaborative organizations of schools and educators were created during this same period; membership was limited to schools that offered a degree.

The field of landscape architecture, like architecture, has developed numerous organizations to manage various aspects of education and practice in this profession. Currently there are separate organizations for boards of registration (CLARB), to manage accreditation of educational programs (LAAB), and for educators (CELA). The ASLA also has student chapters for landscape architecture students. Landscape architecture also has a national exam (LARE) and the profession has continuing education requirements for licensing professionals. Landscape architecture in the United States does not have a research group equivalent to the ARCC, but this field has created an international group, the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA).

Planning

The field that concerns itself with the intentional layout of roads, buildings, towns, and cities by professionals—a portion of what is now the field of planning—had a later start than architecture and engineering, though it drew on many of the same ideas and skills. Accounts of the beginnings of planning differ and draw from or highlight the contributions of different actors and participants. Conventional histories contend that planning was established by prominent male specialists, primarily architects, through their work in producing major designed environments such as the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the plans of Washington, DC, and other major cities. Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted, Cass Gilbert, and others led the so-called "City Beautiful" movement, which proposed large scale formal ordering systems to organize and beautify the rapidly growing major cities of North American and other parts of the world. The large scale of these proposals and their effect on the broader landform naturally aligned them with fields such as engineering and surveying.

Others argue that planning developed from a diverse group of both women and men who worked in multiple areas that brought together the political, social, and environmental issues of the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. The resulting efforts to address broad changes in society and human need have been termed "The City Social" as opposed to "The City Beautiful." (Spain 2002) As the United States population grew, intensifying urban densities and the mixing of new types of people in closer proximity resulted in many new problems and large-scale social issues including immigration, housing, and public health.

Planning as a self-identified field can be traced to the First National Conference on City Planning which was held in May 1909 in Washington, DC, with forty-three attendees. The American City Planning Institute was formally created in 1917, comprising architects, landscape architects, engineers, and some interested in housing, administration, and law. Eventually it changed its name to the American Institute of Planners and merged in 1978 with the American Society of Planning Officials to become what is now the American Planning Association (APA). Despite this complicated genealogy, the APA now claims the 1909 conference as its "birthdate." Although planning as a field has included women as practitioners and part of the public to be served from the beginning, it has also periodically sought to define its expertise as

“technical” rather than “social,” which has often excluded issues that many women practitioners have focused on such as housing, parks, and public health.

Planning does not have the system of state licensure that was established by architecture and engineering and later followed by landscape architecture and, to some extent, interior design. Planning does have a national credential—membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP)—administered by the APA. Earning the AICP designation requires passing a national exam and maintaining APA membership. Planning schools and educators participate in the American Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP). Students can join the Planning Students Organization (PSO) and educational programs are overseen by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). Planning’s affinity for research is manifested in its two scholarly journals—APA publishes the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (JAPA) and ACSP the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (JPER), which is similar to the American Collegiate Schools of Architecture’s *Journal of Architectural Education* (JAE).

Interior Design

The work of designing rooms and interiors was culturally assigned to the realm of the female and domestic and developed in the nineteenth century under the umbrella of women’s “separate sphere.” Lulu Stoughton Beem, in *Inland Architect* of October 1884, wrote, “Women are naturally better judges of color, better in the blending of fabrics, besides knowing intuitively what is wanted about a house—wants too small for men to perceive” (Berkeley 1980, 205). The ideology of domesticity, perceived as neither “technical” nor “professional,” allowed women to give advice directly to other women about shared concerns, both individually and through a variety of written and published avenues such as newspaper columns and ladies’ magazines. The relational nature of this personalized advice giving between women probably contributed to interior design evolving into a field with its economic organization based on sales and commissions rather than the professionalized fee-for-service model of engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, and planning.

Interior design continues to include a number of subfields based on differing sorts of design practitioners and clients ranging from “decorating” (typically comprising residential projects carried out by designers with less formal training or education) to interior design (typically including a range of projects

from residential to commercial, often produced by designers with a higher level of training and education) to interior architecture (typically comprising large commercial and institutional projects, under the supervision of designers with the highest level of training or education, which often parallels the amount of education and training that architects must complete to achieve licensure).

The field of interior design came to the design professions table somewhat later than architecture, landscape architecture, and planning. The current interior design professional organizations have multiple roots and serve different interests within the overall field. The original name of the first association is not entirely clear, but there seems to be agreement that its acronym was AID and that it was created in 1931.¹ A parallel organization was the National Society of Interior Designers (NSID), created in 1957. These two organizations merged to form the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) in 1975, which remains the primary association for designers who specialize in residential interiors. In 1994 an alternative organization that focuses on the interests of designers who specialize in commercial and institutional interiors was created, the International Interior Design Association (IIDA).

In the last thirty years, the field of interior design has managed to construct many of the same organizational structures as the professions of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning. In addition to the two organizations for professionals (ASID and IIDA) they have established one that manages the licensure of interior designers, the National Council of Interior Design Qualifications (NCIDQ). Programs of study are overseen by the Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research (FIDER), which is now called the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), and educators belong to the Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC). There is also a national examination and an internship program called the Interior Design Experience Program (IDEP), both managed by NCIDQ, although licensure of interior designers remains a state-by-state patchwork in which some states have no license program for interior design at all, some regulate title only, and some regulate both title and practice. As of 2008, California has administered its own examination for interior designers, the IDEX. So far, continuing education requirements for interior designers seem to be rare.

¹ Some sources report that it was the American Institute of Decorators, while others say that it was the American Institute of Interior Decorators, the American Institute of Interior Designers, or the Association of Interior Designers.

Education

Many areas of knowledge that have become professions were originally taught and learned through apprenticeship systems, where the learner essentially shadowed the teacher as that person carried out their usual work. Professions have increasingly created and/or aligned themselves with educational programs that teach the knowledge and skills of the professional activity in a formal, organized setting. Over time, completion of approved educational programs has become an alternative route to professional membership, and in some cases the only acceptable route for achieving a license or credential to practice in the field.

As a result of increased access to education and education-driven credentialing in the professions, post-secondary education has become widespread in all of the design fields. In the case of architecture, education at the collegiate level has grown in importance to become the primary path to vocation as an architect. The “first professional degree” initially had the primary function of reducing the length of time in internship, but now, in most states, a degree in architecture from an accredited program is required to enter a formal internship, become eligible to take the licensing examination, and obtain a license, which is required to practice independently. The requirements for other design professions vary slightly but most have, over time, come to model their standards on that of architecture.

The usual post-secondary educational sequence for architecture, landscape architecture, and planning now includes completing three to five years of highly specialized instruction at the undergraduate or more often graduate level,² a period of apprenticeship, internship, or supervised and documented work experience, and passing a state and/or national examination.³ The requirement of post-secondary education, in conjunction with state-level licensing regulations, serves as a gate-keeping function for these professions, as acquiring the educational credential is necessary to advance to the internship, exam, and licensing phases. This sequence of requirements gives educational programs a high level of control over the content of designers’ educations and socialization into the value systems (including norms around identity, difference, and power) that will define them as future professionals. Some of the professional membership

² Licensure in architecture requires what is called a “first professional degree,” which can be obtained at the undergraduate or graduate level. The length of study required is typically five years at the undergraduate level, and two or three years at the graduate level, depending upon the student’s area of study for their undergraduate degree.

³ This structure and sequence of professional education is similar in related fields, although planning does not require licensure for practice and the field of interior architecture/design has not achieved consistent state licensure.

organizations also have student organizations or chapters, including the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), and Planning Student Organizations (PSOs), which are affiliated with the American Institute of Planners. The specific content of educational programs is now managed in ever-greater detail by a series of organizations such as National Association of Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB), Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB), Planning Accreditation Board (PAB), and Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

Differentiation and Discrimination

Describing this extensive system of organizations and controls on educational content and professional behaviors is tedious, but it documents the pervasive work professions engage in to structure the education of students, control and evaluate the apprenticeship and internship process, establish standards of performance for licensed professionals, and protect the profession's areas of knowledge and expertise. On one hand, these efforts protect public interests by ensuring that those who provide specialized services that affect the health, safety, and welfare of the public actually have the knowledge and skills they purport to have. On the other hand, these explicit standards and accompanying norms can work to discourage—and even eliminate—those who don't share all of the profession's values, or lack the social background and contacts, supports, skills, determination, and/or financial resources to enter the system or advance to the next level. These informal and unarticulated expectations organize professional behaviors and opportunities in gendered ways, yet are seldom identified or officially recognized as barriers to entry and practice. In the spatial design professions, this can be seen in the distribution of women and men in different fields; shifts in gender distribution among students, interns, early career and late career practitioners; overt and subtle patterns of discrimination, salary disparities, and even media coverage by gender.

These fields have become differentiated not only by areas of special interest and expertise but also by significant gender separation. For example, by the 1929–1930 academic year, there were fifty-two schools of architecture in the United States. Out of a total of 6,006 students registered as candidates for regular degrees, there were 271 women in the fields of Architecture, Architectural Engineering, and Decoration, or just over 4.5 percent. The breakdown within subfields is telling, however; of the students in

Architecture, about 3.9 percent were women; in Architectural Engineering, just over half a percent; and in Decoration, slightly more than 72 percent. Of the total number of students who received their first professional degrees in design that year, women comprised almost 4 percent; while the number of female students entering that year approached 6 percent (Bosworth and Jones 1932, 188-189).⁴ The first formal degree program in Planning had just been established at Harvard University in 1929, but was not open to women, and the first professional association in interior design was yet to be founded.

Recent data on current membership in professional organizations by date of formation and gender, summarized in Table 3, shows that the more recently the field established itself, the higher the percentage of women participants.⁵ Civil engineering's first professional organization in the United States was established in 1852, and the percentage of women members of the profession is 15 percent. Architecture, which established the AIA in 1857, has 20 percent women participants. Landscape architecture, which created the ASLA in 1899, has 24-34 percent women (the higher number in public work, the lower one in the private sector and in academic positions). The professional organization of the field of urban and regional planning was founded in 1917, and this field has 40 percent women. Interior design, which established its first professional organization in 1931, has a membership of 70-85 percent women.

Landscape architecture has a slightly higher percentage of women practitioners than architecture, possibly because of this field's association with nature, plants, and gardening, which have a long association with the female and feminine in Western culture. Within this segment of women landscape architects, the percentage of women is higher in municipal work rather than the private client side, often because public projects are regulated in ways that provide a more even playing field for women and minority-owned firms. Planning is slightly less bounded by professional strictures and not surprisingly more amenable to discussions of gender, race, identity, and power; also not surprisingly, it has a higher percentage of women practitioners than architecture or landscape architecture. Interior design remains a female-dominated field, while contending with simultaneous struggles: on one side, to gain a portion of the lucrative and higher status contract design market (commercial and institutional work), and on the other, to retain a connection to its residential, domestic, and female-identified "decorating" origins.

⁴ Data on faculty numbers was included, but was not disaggregated by sex.

⁵ This information was compiled in 2012 from the websites of relevant organizations and the US federal government's Occupational Outlook Handbook, which can be accessed online at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.

As each field has developed and defined itself over time, it has worked to become a profession by masculinizing its core area of knowledge and expertise, focusing on a fee-for-service model of economic exchange rather than a peer-to-peer or community-based mode of practice, and minimizing its association with actual women participants and women's concerns of the time, whether those are defined as the practical, the domestic, or the natural. This evidence of a higher percentage of women participating in each of the later-created fields is not accidental or happenstance, but the product of the sequence of professionalization of these fields, a process that has occurred within a gendered context in society in which women's opportunities have broadened over time, yet not fundamentally shifted the gendered nature of existing fields and professions. Surely these processes are multifactorial—a woman may end up in the field of planning rather than architecture, or interior design rather than planning, for multiple reasons including the possibility that her personal values and individual interests are more aligned with that particular field. But the future practitioner's process of self-selection is not separate from the processes that the professions themselves have undergone to construct their own values and interests so that women are less likely to participate and perform successfully in them.

This broad analysis of a group of related fields over the last one hundred and fifty years suggests that feminist analysis, or perhaps any kind of critical identity work, within any single one of these professions continues to be a challenge because the underlying organization of professions and evolving process of defining fields continually work together, both overtly and covertly, to move the "other" outside the boundaries of the field. Explicit feminist analysis within any single field has been continually subverted through a process of marginalizing or eliminating the individuals involved and/or defining the ideas and work as insignificant, not relevant, or "domestic" or "natural," and therefore, by definition, not part of the official, professional activity.

The "female," "feminine," and "domestic" have ended up clustered in the "interior" of interior design, while the explicitly feminist wanders without a home. As long as the boundaries of professions *as they define themselves* are not questioned, it is almost impossible to avoid this outcome. Attempting to engage in discourse about the power dynamics involved in this process again results in marginalization or exclusion; therefore, to stay within the field, one cannot participate in these discourses. Explicitly anti-woman, anti-feminist, or anti-equity language need not be used to exclude marginalized values and

individuals when these other strategies are available, and the simple inertia of established habit and practice is a powerful contributor to this process. While my study focuses on women, it may shed some light on how these principles operate in the case of other forms of difference such as race, class, and sexuality.

Women and Education in the Design Professions

While the design professions were negotiating over boundaries, responsibilities, credentials, and educational programs during the last one hundred and fifty years, most women were busy with other tasks, but this did not mean they lacked interest in the designed environment. The first comprehensive history of architecture published in the United States—*A History of Architecture from the Earliest Times* (1848)—was written by a woman, Louisa Caroline Tuthill. Tuthill published other works on architecture, primarily for young people, as well as the first American collection of Victorian British art critic John Ruskin's works, which was reprinted more than twenty times (Allaback 1993). Tuthill's architectural history book remains very little known in the field of architecture compared to another of its period, Gottfried Semper's *The Four Elements of Architecture* (1851) or a later nineteenth-century classic, Bannister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* (1897).⁶

Tuthill's works were not alone in demonstrating mid-nineteenth-century American women's interest in architecture and the related design fields as they existed at the time. Although women were in many cases occupying "separate spheres" from men, at least in the daily world of middle- and upper-class Americans, they did not hold back from developing ideas, organizations, and designs to shape the physical and social environments in which they lived. Women in this era were involved in planning, engineering, design, construction, decoration, and invention of systems related to the built environment in a myriad of ways, many not documented or recognized by the official chroniclers of design history (Cole 1973b, Brown 1979, Hayden 1981, Spain 2002). Despite their work being minimized, marginalized, forgotten, or defined as "not professional," women in the United States have been imagining and creating living environments

⁶ Fletcher's book has not only remained in print, it has been considerably revised and updated in its 20th edition and is still used in contemporary architectural education, while continuing to have Fletcher's name on it. Tuthill's book is now available online, at no cost, but its influence has never penetrated the educational realm in architecture to the extent of either Fletcher or Semper.

from the room to the city, promoting, and publishing their accomplishments, and writing their own versions of spatial design and planning history for one hundred and fifty years.

The nineteenth-century cultural ideology of “separate spheres” for women and men required separation of the sexes in every area of life outside the domestic realm of home, at least for the middle and upper-middle classes. Black women and poor women had little access to the privilege of not working and were also denied access to most of the few opportunities that did exist for white women and those of the middle and upper classes (Rosenberg 1982, Kerber 1988). Among those who might have had access to the design education that existed, social expectations laid out parallel tracks for men outside the home and women within the home or in areas defined as appropriate to women’s special domestic knowledge and sensibilities such as public parks and sanitation, caring for immigrants and the poor, and carrying out works to benefit the less privileged. Rhetoric of the time both appropriated women’s “special talents” for these areas and justified their exclusion from the more business-focused professions.

Between 1870 and 1920, the United States population went from 26 percent urban to 51 percent urban, resulting in an enormous need for housing, transportation, industrial facilities, and opportunities for recreation. New attention was paid to not only the arrangement of streets, squares, and building plots, but the location and design of public buildings, parks, playgrounds, transportation ways, and industrial facilities. Comprehensive zoning also began to be established in this period, and many of these tasks were taken on by city governing bodies. Despite social expectations limiting their participation, women found ways of affecting the designed and built environment for themselves, their families, towns, and cities. Women also worked on behalf of groups they perceived as benefiting from attention and care to the planning issues of urban and rural communities, built structures, parks, and other public and private spaces.

Within the late nineteenth-century ideology of women’s special connections to nature and the domestic realm, periodicals and popular literature encouraged privileged women to educate themselves about home design, decorating, and gardening. These concerns expanded into both a volunteer commitment to these issues at the local and municipal scale (Hayden 1981, Spain 2002) and development of avenues for professional development through which some women with talent and interest could obtain training and skill to support themselves by providing these services to others. Women were involved in writing, designing, and inventing; engaging in public works to make the environment safer, more efficient, and

more beautiful; and improving conditions for other women and for families and disadvantaged individuals as they defined them at the time.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, women were instrumental in identifying and addressing the new and significant problems of urban industrializing America (Hayden 1981, Spain 2002). Although relatively few women may have been participating in the formal activities of architecture, urban planning, engineering, and construction, women volunteers were busy in the process of helping the new urban environments adapt to and provide for the needs of four new groups of people entering American cities: immigrants from Europe, black migrants from the American South, independent women leaving rural areas for new urban opportunities, and the social group comprised of women reformers themselves, mostly middle and upper class, but some working class as well. These individuals sought new economic and social opportunities as well as new identities appropriate to the urbanizing settings in which they now lived. Women were central to rural improvement societies, communitarian socialism, municipal housekeeping, the settlement house movement, and several decades later, calling themselves “housers,” as they advocated for improved housing and housing policy in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Daphne Spain’s research has made visible the role of women in the late-nineteenth century in creating what she calls “redemptive places” in the new urban environments through the use of the Social Gospel, a Christian-framed philosophy of help and support for people’s practical needs that was widespread during the Progressive era and focused on using Biblical teachings to address pressing social problems. Women in smaller local groups and as members of larger organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and the Young Women’s Christian Associations (YWCA) worked together to provide settlement houses, boarding houses, hotels, vocational schools, kindergartens, libraries, playgrounds, small parks, and public baths, which all served as “actual spaces in which problems associated with race relations, immigration, and women’s status were worked out” (Spain 2001, 5). The notion of the “social gospel” was eventually augmented and replaced by the concept of “municipal housekeeping,” a more secular philosophy of women’s responsibility for creating cleanliness and order in the urban environment (Spain 2001, 9; Hayden 1981), also carried out by rural village improvement societies of the time.

Spain argues that women’s city building activities in these arenas of urban life were an antidote to Gilded Age commercialism and capitalism and formed the “City Social” that filled in the gaps ignored by

the “City Beautiful” movement which was primarily led by male architects, landscape architects, engineers, and urban planners who focused on imagining and carrying out extensive formal plans. Women as “municipal housekeepers” worked to establish a form of order that transformed strangers, often immigrants, into successful urban residents through education, public health interventions, and housing programs. This work and the scholarship of researchers like Daphne Spain and Dolores Hayden have helped make visible the role of women’s attention to “community work” and the issues of neighborhoods, not just the household or the city as a whole (Spain 2001, 6).

Through these activities and organizations, women were involved in laying the foundations of what were to become sociology, social work, and city planning. Some women also participated in the design fields, obtaining professional credentials, and establishing successful practices. They did this by overcoming many barriers to success. These barriers are faced by men as well, but women have often had to overcome additional obstacles ranging from overt and explicit discrimination, unconscious and perhaps unintended bias, lack of financial and emotional support, shortage of money and time to devote to educational tasks and establishing professional success, and difficulties in combining work and family concerns—most of which continue to affect women attempting to enter the traditionally male-dominated professions today. Within the long-term expansion of women’s educational opportunities more broadly, and the development of the design fields as professions based on credentialing and academic training, educational opportunities specifically for women have occasionally appeared, and sometimes disappeared.

Design Schools for Women

From the mid-1800s on, women in the United States had several avenues through which to access education and work in design. Informal options such as self-study and becoming an authority on your own were available for some women, perhaps through writing and publishing for an audience of others in their social class. Apprenticeship or private training was another option for some, if they could find someone to take on a woman in this role (sometimes a husband). Attending a formal education program was possible for a few, although the small number of schools that accepted women limited this option. However a growing number of middle- and upper-middle class women sought education in these fields and had the resources to create opportunities where none existed or existing doors were closed to them. In a related

series of developments, schools in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia focused on industrial design and invention, providing women with education in these fields (Allaback 1998).

The land grant institutions, a series of colleges and universities created through the federal Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, generally accepted women, although many specific courses of study did not (see Wright 1977, on early women in architectural education, and Berkeley 1980, 206). For example, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which was originally a land grant institution, opened in 1861; architecture was first taught in 1965 and the department of architecture created in 1868; the institute as a whole opened its doors to women in 1883; and the department of architecture to women in 1885 (Shillaber 1961, in Berkeley 1980, 205). Cornell University had graduated three women in architecture by 1880 (Weatherhead 1941, 33, in Berkeley 1980, 206⁷). Access to such an education did not mean an easy path: “The land-grant schools, unable to exclude women, were often grossly inhospitable to those who couldn’t be ‘counseled’ away; only a stubborn and single-minded woman finished the course at the state universities in the early decades of the twentieth century” (Berkeley 1980, 206).

A few of the single-sex women’s colleges created landscape design programs, including Vassar College, Wellesley College, and Smith College, but these were not accessible to women outside of these baccalaureate programs (Schneider 1988). Within women’s changing social opportunities and interests, and the evolving fields dedicated to physical design of the environment, two independent coeducation institutions emerged that were devoted to the education of women as designers: the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening (1901-1945) and the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (1915-1944). In addition, the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture (1910-1957) offered education for women on horticulture and landscape gardening, although no graduates are known to have practiced as landscape architects (Knight 1986).

The Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening

The Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening was an independent residential program in landscape architecture, landscape gardening, and horticulture founded in 1901 by Judith Eleanor Motley

⁷ Berkeley also points out that this was the only mention of women in Weatherhead’s 252-page dissertation, *The History of Collegiate Education in Architecture in the United States*.

Low on her 17-acre estate in Groton, Massachusetts (Anderson 1980, Schneider 1988).⁸ The school existed for almost 45 years and graduated around 300 women before becoming part of the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 1945.⁹ Lowthorpe has been the focus of two thesis documents—a 1986 Cornell thesis in landscape architecture by Jane Alison Knight, and a 1988 RISD thesis by Richard A. Schneider, who graduated that year from what was still officially named the Lowthorpe Department of Landscape Architecture.

Lowthorpe was the second program to be established for the purpose of offering professional training in landscape architecture, only one year after the first professional program was initiated at Harvard. At first the school admitted both high school and college graduates into a two-year certificate program. In 1915, the emphasis changed to focus entirely on professional education in landscape architecture, and the program of studies expanded from a two-year to a three-year curriculum. This helped graduates in their professional careers, since starting in 1925 a certificate allowed women to become junior members of the ASLA (Knight 1986, 194).

Judith Eleanor Motley Low believed that women were especially suited to the activities of landscape architecture, gardening, and horticulture. Under her leadership, the Lowthorpe curriculum focused on residential design at all scales, from single-family homes to subdivisions. Studies at Lowthorpe incorporated city planning as that field developed. Apparently the school was well respected, supported by leaders in the profession and the alumnae network, and “gained quiet acceptance by landscape architects and those in academic circles” (Knight 1986, 193). The students did well in the Landscape Exchange Problems, a series of cooperative design projects between academic landscape architecture programs and professional offices that started in 1924. The curriculum was known to include practical work that was “an integral part of the curriculum offering ‘hands-on’ experience with plant material, construction, and surveying” (Knight 1986, 196). The horticultural elements of this training were very important and were supported by the school’s extensive plant collection.

⁸ Part of the impetus behind the creation of both Lowthorpe and the Cambridge School was MIT’s decision to cease offering landscape design coursework in 1899. This eliminated that educational option for women in the Boston area and left only Harvard, which did not accept women in the design courses until 1945 (Anderson 1980).

⁹ The RISD archives contain a small collection of documents relating to the history of Lowthorpe and its merger with RISD.

From the 1920s on, Lowthorpe maintained and often exceeded its optimum enrollment of thirty students, but had two major chronic problems: lack of a stable financial base and inability to grant a degree, both of which were mutually reinforcing challenges. These challenges reinforced each other: not offering a degree made it difficult to compete with schools that offered one, and prevented the school from receiving federal funds, which was a concern to the trustees and faculty as well as potential donors and parents of the school's students. These concerns were exacerbated by the school's rural location in Groton, thirty-six miles north of Boston and four miles from the railroad station. It was difficult to attract students and instructors or access the libraries and other educational resources available in Boston. Given these challenges, it was remarkable that Lowthorpe and its students participated so robustly in educational activities with other schools in the region, which provides evidence that women were seriously invested in education in this field.

To mitigate these problems, Lowthorpe experimented with a number of different arrangements including cooperative programming with design programs in Boston to provide students with easier access to Boston's educational and social resources. In 1928 Lowthorpe and the Cambridge School collaborated to offer a joint European summer travel program. The school also entered into an association with Simmons College from 1928 to 1934 to offer degrees through a program that included liberal arts courses and led to a bachelor's or master's degree. From 1934 on, both students and faculty spent the winter term at the MIT Department of Architecture in Cambridge.

Lowthorpe's primary sources of operating funds were student tuition, special events, patronesses, and donations from the Board of Directors (Knight 1986, 193). These enabled the school to survive but did not allow for capital improvements or expansion. Lowthorpe lacked the "fairy godmother" it was rumored that the Cambridge School had (Knight 1986, 23). Financial concerns were exacerbated by the school's extensive grounds and physical plant, which included greenhouses and many old buildings. After twenty-five years, Lowthorpe trustees and administrators attempted to establish an endowment through a fundraising drive, but the funds garnered were used to add student dormitory space and improve the drafting room, and no endowment was created. In the 1930s, a donation from the Garden Club of America was used to build a new greenhouse. During the Depression, Fletcher Steele advised John Parker, the school's director from 1934–1945, not to ask board members for more substantial contributions. A final

attempt to raise funds took place during the fortieth year celebration in 1941; subsequently, negotiations to merge with a larger institution were initiated.

About three hundred women graduated from Lowthorpe in its forty-five-year existence, gaining an education in landscape architecture and design that focused on horticultural knowledge and practical skills. These skills helped them find jobs or become self-employed in this aspect of spatial design and the developing professions. Within the differing opportunities for women and men in society at the time, the single-sex environment of Lowthorpe also fostered supportive relationships between women that helped students over the hurdles that followed graduation. “Employment opportunities were open to Lowthorpe graduates through these connections. . . . [and] many graduates gained work experience in the offices of Lowthorpe alumnae before establishing their own practices. This avoided the discrimination that some women met in seeking work” (Knight 1986, 197).

The decision to give up Lowthorpe’s existence as an independent school was not taken lightly, nor was the process simple or speedy. The trustees no doubt watched and learned from the experiences of the Cambridge School in affiliating with Smith College in the 1930s. Lowthorpe approached twenty-one widely varying institutions about a possible merger, including single-sex women’s colleges, state universities, schools with design programs, and those without.¹⁰ Offers were received from RISD, Connecticut College, the University of Texas (Austin), University of Rochester, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). RISD, UNC, and Rochester were seriously interested (Knight 1986, 200). In 1944 and 1945, a series of negotiations resulted in Lowthorpe’s assets, and its twelve remaining students, being transferred to RISD to create the Lowthorpe Department of Landscape Architecture. No doubt it seemed that becoming part of RISD would ensure Lowthorpe’s continued existence while providing the advantages of a larger institution—a degree, expanded facilities and courses in related fields, and a broader program of studies.

¹⁰ The following institutions were approached: Connecticut College (CT), Bennington College (VT), Wheaton College (MA), Mills College (CA), Antioch College (OH), University of Texas [Austin] (TX), University of California Berkeley (CA), The Claremont Colleges (CA), University of Washington (WA), University of Oregon (OR), Stamford University [*sic*] probably Stanford University, CA), Reed College (OR), Northwestern University (IL), Penn State College (PA), Sarah Lawrence (NY), Skidmore College (NY), Wellesley College (MA), Rhode Island School of Design (RI), University of Rochester (NY), University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (NC), and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MA).

For the first year after the merger, Lowthorpe's Director, John Parker and four faculty members went to RISD to assist in setting up the new department, and a member of the Lowthorpe Board of Trustees was appointed to the RISD Board to oversee the transition. Sadly, the Trustees' hope of continued existence for Lowthorpe was not realized. Within a few years, reorganization of the RISD design departments resulted in architecture, landscape architecture, and interior architecture being grouped under the broad concept of a School of Planning. Practitioners of the three fields were encouraged to collaborate under the direction of "the Architect," since "his is the basic science and in actual practice it is so developed."¹¹ This concept of program arrangement was in line with contemporary ideas on interdisciplinary design education and practice, but did not allow the department of landscape architecture to maintain a separate identity under the Lowthorpe name. It also did not justify the continued separation of Lowthorpe's original resources from those of the broader school. Its extensive landscape architecture and horticulture library was incorporated into the broader institution, and Lowthorpe continued to exist in the name of the department until at least 1988, when Richard Schneider finished his thesis documenting Lowthorpe's history.

Knight (1986) observed that the merger with RISD did not seem to support Lowthorpe's long-standing focus on practical knowledge and learning by doing, which may have limited the capacity of the graduates to have broader influence on the profession. She also observed "It is significant, and unfortunate, that Lowthorpe graduates have not impacted the profession by their writing and teaching. . . . Only two are known to have taught landscape architecture in any capacity, both at Lowthorpe" (198). Not included in her thesis is any discussion of whether gender issues in the design fields played any role in the demise of Lowthorpe as an independent institution, or its relatively quick disappearance into the body of RISD. In documents I had access to, the Lowthorpe trustees did not mention coeducation, only the benefits students would gain from the merger, including access to broader academic resources and learning from the urban environment—although focusing on these resources could have been a sort of code for access to a greater social circle or other perceived advantages of a coeducational environment.

¹¹ Phillip D. Creer letter to John Parker, October 4, 1945, Lowthorpe Records, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.

The Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women

The Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women, located near Philadelphia, was founded by Jane Bowne Haines in 1910, and existed until 1957, when it became part of Ambler Junior College and eventually Temple University. Haines wanted to provide a two-year course of study for women, focused on horticulture and gardening along with study of fruit growing, beekeeping, and home poultry raising (Temple University, School of Environmental Design 2014). Haines grew up on a large estate on which her father had established a fruit and shade tree nursery. She was educated at Bryn Mawr and the Library School in Albany, New York, and went on to work at the Library of Congress, eventually returning home to Philadelphia to help run the family business. She visited gardening schools in Europe and purchased the farm in Ambler to establish a residential horticultural school modeled on the ones she had visited in England, which were based on a “learning by doing” philosophy. The curriculum focused on horticulture and agriculture, eventually expanding to other agricultural topics. After World War I, courses on business management and landscape architecture were added, but according to Knight (1986), no graduates are known to have practiced landscape architecture professionally.

The Pennsylvania School of Horticulture existed under that name as an independent institution for almost forty years. After it merged with Ambler Junior College it was given approval to grant associates degrees in science. In that form it merged with Temple University in 1958 and became coeducational. As of 2012, Temple University has a Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, but there seems to be no mention of the Pennsylvania School on its website, and it is not clear what happened to the gardening curriculum. However, the Ambler Campus of Temple University website does include information on the Pennsylvania School history and contributions to the campus arboretum (Temple University, School of Environmental Design 2014).

The Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

The Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture was yet another response to the Progressive-era expansion of women’s interest in the design professions and desire for education in design. Almost 500 women passed through its doors during its nearly thirty-year existence. The Cambridge School came into being in 1915, when a Radcliffe College graduate named Katherine Brooks sought to

study landscape architecture at Harvard but was turned away because Harvard did not accept women students. The head of the School of Landscape Architecture, James Sturgis Pray, suggested that Brooks be tutored by Henry Atherton Frost, a young instructor of architecture at Harvard. Their teaching arrangement began in the living room of Brooks's Cambridge home and within a year, five women were studying together in the Cambridge Square office Frost shared with his business partner, Bremer Pond (Anderson in Berkeley 1980, 206). Mr. Pond was also an instructor at Harvard, in the department of landscape architecture. Thus the Cambridge School curriculum combined studies in architecture and landscape architecture from its earliest days.

Of this small number of stand-alone programs for women in design, the Cambridge School is the most well documented, although the details of its story are not well known in either of the fields it covered. One chapter of Doris Cole's book *From Tipi to Skyscraper: A History of Women in Architecture* (1973b) focused on the school, and that chapter was published in *Architecture Plus* in December of the same year (1973a). Dorothy May Anderson, who had herself attended the Cambridge School and taught first at Lowthorpe and later at the Cambridge School, prepared an extensive report for the ASLA in the mid-1970s on the Cambridge School, which was published as *Women, Design, and the Cambridge School* in 1980. This remains the most recent and most comprehensive publication on this educational institution.

At first the educational endeavor for women conducted in Frost and Pond's office did not have an official name, but was only called "The Little School." Its earliest formal name was the Cambridge School of Domestic Architecture and Landscape Architecture, although it was usually referred to as the Cambridge School of Architectural and Landscape Design for Women (Anderson 1980, 15). The program of study at the Cambridge School was generally three years and included "elementary, intermediate, and advanced design, intermediate and advanced horticulture, history, construction, freehand, modeling, and office practice" (7). During the 1916-1917 academic year, enrollment was up to twelve students, and they began making field trips to local nurseries, gardens, and estates, as well as more extended trips to visit sites of interest around New England and in New York City (14).

Students at the Cambridge School had a variety of backgrounds. Some arrived with some college education or a baccalaureate degree (often from one of the women's colleges such as Smith, Radcliffe, Wellesley, or Vassar), while others had only a high school education. This mixture of students with more

and less academic preparation continued throughout the Cambridge School's history. The founders often observed that the older students assisted the younger ones and in doing so, facilitated their own learning.

Education at the Cambridge School focused on houses and gardens at first, but as Frost and Pond realized that their students were just as well suited to tackling larger-scale works, they expanded the scope of the school's courses and design projects. Courses in Town Planning and Housing were added in 1918, and the students also participated in the Landscape Exchange Problems in the 1920s (Anderson 1980, 34). However, the instructors at the Cambridge School always focused on the relationships of architecture and the surrounding landscape, emphasizing "the principle that design . . . was inclusive, that one could not create good volumes nor indeed practical ones, without an appreciation of areas and of the spatial relationship of the volume to its surroundings; that the building *and* its surroundings comprised the design, rather than the building *or* its surroundings" (23; italics in original).

By the mid-1920s the Cambridge School was confronting challenges similar to those of Lowthorpe, including perennial lack of funds and inability to grant degrees. Unlike Lowthorpe, the school in Cambridge seems to have had no problem attracting students, and was constantly outgrowing its space (Anderson 1980, 33). Various strategies were considered, including advertising and adding a course in Interior Decorating (36). Cooperative projects with other schools were launched, including two experiments with Lowthorpe: a student exchange during the 1925–1926 year, and an eight-week European travel course during the summer of 1928 (in which two male Harvard students also participated) (38).

But the main problem seemed to be providing students with access to a degree rather than a certificate. Frost and the directors began seeking solutions similar to the one that Lowthorpe was attempting at the same time: affiliation with an accredited college. In 1928 Lowthorpe entered into its affiliation with Simmons College, and the Cambridge School began to explore similar options. One idea considered was to create a "Graduate School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture serving 'the seven outstanding women's colleges of the east,'" but the obstacles to creating such a program were far too great. Other institutions considered included Radcliffe College, Simmons College, Smith College, and Columbia University. The president of Radcliffe, Ada Louise Comstock, was very interested in the Cambridge School and its programs, but ultimately not willing to go to the Massachusetts State Legislature to gain approval to give new graduate degrees (Anderson 1980, 54).

After all the discussions, Smith College seemed the best choice for an affiliation, as by then Frost was convinced that “women received better training when taught separately from men” (Anderson 1980, 55) and Smith College had already demonstrated its interest in relevant fields through its undergraduate courses in horticulture (beginning in 1900) and landscape architecture (beginning in 1914) (55). In the late 1920s, Smith College also began offering courses in architecture.

In 1928 Frost made a final proposal to Smith College for the Cambridge School to provide graduate-level training both to graduates of women’s colleges and “mature students lacking a college degree” who were prepared to do the work. The proposal continued to emphasize the “necessary interrelation of the two professions” (60) and would offer the degrees Master of Architecture and Master of Landscape Architecture to students who had already earned a bachelor’s degree, and a Certificate to those who had not (97).

Both faculty and students recognized that prejudice against women in these fields continued. Graduates of the Cambridge School sometimes encountered resistance to their employment in both architecture and landscape architecture, but many kept up their professional work and even started their own firms, often hiring other Cambridge School graduates. In 1930, eighty-three percent of all graduates and sixty percent of married ones were professionally active (Anderson, in Berkeley 1980, 207).

From 1928 to 1932, the stock market crash and broader economic issues stalled forward movement on any of the Smith College plans, and they were kept confidential for several years. Finally, in 1932, with the support of college president William A. Neilson, the Trustees of Smith College voted to affiliate with the Cambridge School for degree-granting purposes. The word “Domestic” was finally dropped from the name, and it was officially called the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture from that point forward. Smith College became “full owner” of the school in 1938, with a written commitment to “carry on for ten years a Graduate School of Design” even though physically the Cambridge School always remained in Cambridge. There were periodic visits back and forth to the campus in Northampton, Massachusetts, and occasional collaborations with the Harvard Graduate School of Design, which still admitted only men.

The relationship between the Cambridge School and Smith College seems to have been cordial, but Smith had never committed to providing any financial support and funding continued to be a serious

problem. In 1940 the new president of Smith College, Herbert J. Davis, said “I am much afraid that unless we can substantially reduce the present deficit the Trustees will decide to give up the school at the earliest possible moment.” There was revised talk of the Cambridge School becoming part of Radcliffe College, which would have had some advantages, but was once again impossible to work out.

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and additional financial challenges due to a wartime economy, the future of the Cambridge School was suddenly exceedingly dim. In addition, it seemed very likely that the Harvard Graduate School of Design would begin to accept women, at least for the duration of the war, to fill the slots left empty by newly unavailable men. Hurried discussions about the school’s funds and real estate were held, and in January 1942, the Smith Board of Trustees voted almost unanimously to close the Cambridge School. Eleanor Raymond, one of four women on the board who had graduated from the Cambridge School, was the only holdout. For the duration of the war, the Cambridge School ceased to operate and was never revived. Women were accepted into Harvard. The Cambridge School was gone.

Henry Atherton Frost spent a large part of his career outside his teaching responsibilities at Harvard advocating for women’s education in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and housing. He recognized that others were not as supportive of these new participants in the design professions, and worked to achieve these goals by invoking multiple justifications of the appropriateness of women in these fields. In some writings, Frost “encouraged what he saw as the special interest of the Cambridge student: ‘in housing rather than houses; in community centers for the masses rather than in neighborhood clubs for the elect; in regional planning more than in estate planning; in social aspects of her profession more than in private commissions’” (Berkeley 1980, 207). In other publications, Frost emphasized the suitability of design as a career for women because he felt it was relatively easy to develop a private practice at home and would not interfere with marriage and family responsibilities as it could expand and contract with the time she had available. Further, he reasoned, women would attract clients for domestic design projects from the people they met within their existing social circles (Frost and Sears 1928).

Looking Back

The creation, history, and demise of the Lowthorpe School, the Pennsylvania School, and the Cambridge School illuminate the trajectory of opportunities for professional education in design for women during the first half of the twentieth century. These three independent institutions were created during the Progressive Era, a period in which women's interest in professional education, employment, and careers outpaced the opportunities available to them. Changing social and economic conditions resulted in increasing numbers of women seeking education and careers, and some of these women wanted the opportunity to acquire specialized knowledge in design. Although women could attend many existing institutions with design programs, at least in theory, they were not always welcomed. Those who couldn't access existing schools sought out and created alternatives. Women—at least the more privileged groups—slowly gained access to formerly male-only educational and professional fields, in this case through creating somewhat parallel institutions that were shaped by ideologies of the time regarding women's appropriate interests and social roles—connection to the domestic, association with nature, interest in practical knowledge rather than theory, and learning by doing.

In addition to responding to the expanding pool of interested women students who could afford to pay for such an education, these three institutions were created through the intervention of key individuals with specialized knowledge of their fields, the belief that women were as capable as men in carrying out these activities, and the motivation to help women access professional education in design and the careers that would follow. These founders also had access to financial backing to facilitate this process, whether in the form of financial resources of their own, or access to space, publicity, and economic support at least minimally sufficient to meet these nascent needs.

Lowthorpe and the Cambridge School faced many similar challenges throughout their existence: high tuition, lack of endowment to help cover expenses, and difficulty in attracting students who could afford the cost and appealing to parents who believed the education to be of value to their daughters' economic futures. They utilized multiple strategies to survive including actively recruiting students, keeping their tuition rates as low as possible, and attempting to create an endowment. They both contemplated affiliating with other independent schools and degree-granting institutions and explored possible mergers with other institutions in order to survive. (I surmise that the Pennsylvania School

encountered similar obstacles as the trajectory of its creation and demise so closely paralleled the other two schools.)

Lowthorpe and the Cambridge School were each aware of the other's problems and attempted to solve their programmatic and geographical challenges through similar strategies. Offering a degree was one plan that both schools hoped would attract more students and provide them with access to federal student aid, but giving a degree was a goal not easily accomplished. Lowthorpe made efforts to work with schools in the Boston area, including MIT, to overcome the isolation of its rural location almost forty miles away, and collaborated with Simmons College to offer a degree. But its focus on landscape gardening and planting design required an extensive physical facility that was a tremendous liability, being both large and expensive to maintain as well as impossible to move when the school merged with RISD. The Cambridge School managed to affiliate with Smith College from 1932 until its end as an institution in 1944, but never gave up its location in Cambridge, one hundred miles away. Its urban location, near many of the academic resources for design students that still exist a hundred years later, probably supported students' learning but perhaps not the school's relationship with the institution that granted its degrees.¹²

Under Henry Atherton Frost's direction, the Cambridge School was the first of these three schools to enter into a permanent relationship with another institution. The Cambridge School tried to find a way to be part of a degree-granting women's college while also maintaining its identity and function as a separate institution, despite the fact that Smith College officially "owned" it. This left them with a double challenge—being administered by an institution that did not really support the education of women in the design professions and never moving their physical location from Cambridge to Northampton. Although both students and faculty traveled back and forth, the physical distance probably limited the extent to which the power brokers at Smith could know, understand, and feel connected to the Cambridge School's faculty, programs, and students, and probably made the trustees' decision to close it slightly easier.

The Lowthorpe trustees made a series of different choices. They knew their remote geographical location and extensive physical plant were liabilities and worked hard to create options that would allow them to let go of these yet foster the future existence and development of the school in a new form. They

¹² While this was not mentioned in the records I viewed, I wonder how much of RISD's interest in acquiring Lowthorpe was really a desire for the financial resources the land and property represented. This may have been a motivator for Smith College in acquiring the Cambridge School as well.

knew their own school's strengths and challenges and imagined an alternative path that would allow for a successful merging of interests while continuing the Lowthorpe legacy. After their extensive search for potential home, they chose to affiliate with RISD, a school that valued professional training in design, but did not have a particular investment in the education of women. I imagine that the Lowthorpe trustees tried very hard not to have the outcome that was happening to the Cambridge School—and which they no doubt knew about as they were making their own plans for survival.

These two programs survived for multiple decades, pursuing a variety of organizational changes intended to ensure their continued existence, before finally disappearing by mid-century through a combination of merger, complete transformation, or frank ending. Shared issues included student recruitment and retention, the increasing credentialism of the fields and professions they were linked to, and competition with other programs, all within the context of broader political and economic issues such as world wars, economic downturns, and the trend of mainstream educational programs becoming more open and accessible to women, even if not particularly encouraging or supportive of them. The cumulative effects of economic stress and WWII resulted in yet more new roles for women, and many women students attending the previously all male-programs, which combined to weaken the women-only schools and pressure the single-sex men's schools to open their doors to women, a group of potential students they accepted only when absolutely necessary to keep their own doors open (Alofsin 2002, 175-176). While the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women did not formally educate women to become landscape architects, its existence demonstrates the strong interest of women in that era for design-related education that would give them skills for new jobs and the opportunity to be financially self-sufficient.

At the same time, these educational spaces for women did not just create a route into design professions, as these professions already existed, but developed and shaped their approach to these fields based on different values and visions that grew from a different starting point. Because horticulture and gardening were seen as appropriate concerns of women during the time period in which these schools were created, all three schools focused on landscape concerns: Lowthorpe from the ending of women's access to landscape architecture education at MIT in 1900¹³, the Pennsylvania School based on Jane Bowne Haines'

¹³ The landscape architecture department at MIT was closed in 1900 based on the idea that two programs in the same geographical area were not needed (Anderson 1980, 21). Harvard retained its program, which exists to this day. Obviously this decision did not take into consideration women's access to landscape

interest in horticulture; the Cambridge School because Katherine Brooks wished to take courses in landscape architecture at Harvard; only later did the curriculum of the Cambridge School expand to include domestic architecture and larger-scale projects as Frost came to recognize women's abilities and broader interests in planning and the design of built structures.

The educational curriculum at all three schools began by focusing on domestic concerns, as was considered appropriate for women at the time, but Cambridge School design studies did not stop there. Topics associated with female domesticity and the distaff side of society of the time—primarily house and garden design—expanded to include drafting, surveying, and building construction; large-scale horticulture and agriculture; planning, design, and management of estates; town and city planning; public buildings, and park design. These topics expanded from the initial core focus on residential work to larger and larger scales based on women's broad interests rather than on the needs of the nascent system of professionalizing and credentialing in the design professions. Thus each program of study naturally included skills and topics that were being negotiated and divided up between the developing professions of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning, and eventually interior design (a design field that is still engaged in this struggle today) as well as housing, an important area of professional interest in the 1930s and 1940s that never became a separate field.

Because the curriculum of the women's design schools started from the notion of addressing the residential and grew outward from that starting point, their educational focus ended up being more “interdisciplinary,” at least as we understand the spatial design disciplines of today. Even within the development of professions as separate, at various times the professions have lauded “the interdisciplinary” and the schools have promoted interdisciplinary study, such as during the modern movement in architecture. Interdisciplinarity in theory or education, however, has not always led to interdisciplinarity in practice. As the movement toward interdisciplinarity grew in modern architecture, specialized programs for women were being eliminated; a painful irony since interdisciplinary design was part of the women's programs from their inception. However, interdisciplinarity in the early women's design schools grew more naturally out of women's prescribed social pathways rather than out of a theoretical move to cross the

architecture education, as Harvard did not accept women into any of its design programs until 1945, and even then, only grudgingly (Alofsin 2002, 175-176).

established hierarchical and vertical separations of professionals, areas of expertise, and status (Anderson 1980, Berkeley 1983).

These schools educated women in skills common to multiple professions even as those professions were working to differentiate themselves from each other and from women's socially defined concerns. Their inability to offer degrees kept these schools from membership in the educational associations with oversight of professional education, further marginalizing their approach to the subject areas. At the same time, these independent women-only schools enabled women to create social networks that supported the development of professional opportunities in multiple ways—mentoring, hiring, referrals, and reaching out to other educated women who would hire them. The trustees of each school sought strategies for transforming their institution into something that might live on, but with only short-term success. In the end, the Cambridge School joined up with a women's college that had limited interest in design, Lowthorpe merged with a design college that had no special interest in the education of women, and the Pennsylvania School seems to have given up its independence, its single-sex environment, and its focus on horticulture. Social changes of the pre- and post-war periods succeeded in expanding women's opportunities to participate in activities, fields, and educational spaces that had formerly been closed to them. But gains often have parallel losses, which may be quickly forgotten, but hold lessons for future endeavors.

Lessons from the Past

The current shape and delineation of the fields and professions of engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and interior design are not “givens,” but the result of intentional efforts to define and establish realms of work that not only provide useful skills and service to society, but also position certain groups and individuals within a hierarchy of social and economic status and power. The historical review that I have conducted here of the development of the design professions, of women's work in the environment, and of design schools for women, shows that the design and planning fields comprise multiple interests and multiple directions of development that merge and diverge over time within a very broad set of activities that shape the form, function, and meaning of public and private spaces at a variety of scales. There is no inherent “correct” or “best” way to divide up these activities and their

meanings; the current organization of design fields in the United States is the result of long-term effort by individuals and groups based on deeply-held beliefs about “difference,” including gender.

The analytic framework I bring to studying WSPA in this dissertation includes the following principles gained from this historical review:

1. What has been gained can also be lost. The efforts to gain access for women to formerly male-only or male-dominated fields and professions has had benefits, but also corresponding losses. In the design fields, the ending of single-sex schools for women eliminated the spaces in which women, in supportive groups, could directly help each other’s learning and build the larger social networks that led to successful design practices and jobs for other women graduates in the face of limited job opportunities in the broader professions. If the positive values of such spaces are not named and claimed, they are especially vulnerable to disappearing in the face of pressure to join mainstream groups.

2. The more male-dominated the field, the fewer opportunities there are for women and ideas associated with women to flourish. Within this messy set of discourses and practices, an important trend emerges: the more male-dominated the field, the less space it provides for women practitioners and the less interest it shows in ideas explicitly or implicitly associated with women and/or the “feminine,” however these may be defined at a particular historical moment. Design fields and professions are not gender neutral; they actively, if covertly, construct gendered realms, which then influence the fields’ norms and values and work to empower or limit its participants.

3. Women have continued to be involved in a myriad of activities related to spatial design and the creation of communities, even if this work is not included in “professional” realms. Outside of the formally defined design professions, women’s creative work and advocacy in and through design and planning has continued using a variety of methods and under diverse nomenclature, from communitarian socialism to municipal housekeeping, settlement houses to social work, and housing reform and the domestic realm from the family home to the urban agglomeration. These broader concepts and movements have continued despite the parallel development of all the design professions characterized by professional endeavors distinguished from non-professional ones, development of use of credentialing and requirements for education in design professions, masculinization of the professional realm, and continual redefining of domestic work as non-professional and less important.

4. Professions have a weight of history, structure, and organization related to gender that is long-standing, deep, and difficult to change. Multiple and diverse activities related to design of the environment have been channeled into a predominantly individualist, professionalized, consumer-based set of professions. Professions marginalize and minimize connections with collaborative, community-based, cross-disciplinary and cross-activity types of work, which are the forms of space in which many, if not most, women are interested in participating. This is not a “cultural feminist” argument—I don’t argue that this is “women’s nature,” only that from a practical standpoint, domestic and community work is more accessible space and therefore where most women can engage in these activities (equally true for others who cannot access professional training, status, etc.).

5. History and historiography are often complicit in the separation of the professions. These trends manifest themselves not only in the work done by women but in the process by which design and planning work is documented and studied (or not). Since women’s work is defined as less important, it is often ignored or minimized in mainstream histories. The independent design schools for women are poorly documented and discussed in only a few studies, most conducted by individuals who were directly associated with them as students and/or faculty. They are seldom mentioned in the histories of design education, and seen as curious anomalies rather than as significant and successful efforts based on fundamentally different philosophies of design practice and education.

Naming New Problems

After WWII, demographic and social shifts resulted in broad changes in society. Women who had worked during the war returned home, young people rushed to marry, and new towns and suburbs blossomed to provide homes for these new families. Design and planning focused on large-scale construction and redevelopment. The general trend in the design and planning fields toward modernism was expressed in both Europe and North America through a rationalist “form follows function” approach to problem solving, and a stripped-down design aesthetic. The number of women attending architecture school plummeted, though some persevered (Smith 1989).

But like all pendulums, this one too began to swing back in the other direction. The Great Society programs of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson encouraged the New Left and fueled critiques of nuclear

power and weapons as well as the Cold War and the Vietnam conflict. There was an increase in the number of young people attending college, with time on their hands and the chance to think idealistically and the Civil Rights movement and organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee fueled the commitment of many to effect broad changes in society. This included re-visioning conventional lifestyles through communal living, drug use, and “free love.”

New questions were raised about large-scale development, destruction of functioning urban communities, environmental degradation, and other consequences of the rush to improve people’s lives. This time period produced multiple critiques of society, science, and technology, many organized around environmental issues. The publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962 ushered in a new awareness of the environmental consequences of industrialized farming and extensive use of pesticides. The work of environmentalists and anti-nuclear activists fueled a new form of environmentalism marked by proponents of back-to-the-land living and rural communes, culminating in Earth Day 1970 (Gottlieb 1993).

Attention to women’s experiences was beginning to percolate as middle- and upper-class white women attended college in greater numbers and expected job opportunities commensurate with their educational accomplishments. Some began to recognize their negative experiences in isolated suburban homes and as marginalized participants in other social movements of the time. Betty Friedan surveyed her college classmates to find them frustrated and demoralized by “the problem that has no name,” leading to publication of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was created in 1966, and the practice of small group discussion with a political agenda known as consciousness-raising began to spread. *Ms.* magazine was founded in 1972; the Equal Rights Amendment was passed by Congress and sent to the states; Title IX was passed; *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion in 1973; and services for victims of rape and domestic violence were created across the country. Black women were also organizing and bringing the concerns of race to their own perspective on women’s experiences. Combahee River Collective wrote their Statement (1974), a call to action on behalf of black women.

The design fields were not immune to the social uproar and widespread changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s. There was much to criticize and much to change. In planning, Jane Jacobs had punctured the bubble of large scale urban renewal in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), arguing that short blocks and integrated uses provided “eyes on the street” and resulted in a more vibrant

community life than separation of uses and high-rise residential developments. Others in the field took on the challenge of addressing the increased number of black and other minority urban populations through the ideas of equity planning (Krumholtz 1983), advocacy planning (Davidoff 1965), and participatory planning (Arnstein 1969).

In 1968 Whitney Young, Jr., was the keynote speaker at the annual convention of the American Institute of Architects, held that year in Portland, Oregon.¹⁴ Young, Jr. had been the leader/executive director of the National Urban League since 1961 and a prominent voice in the Civil Rights movement, working with political leaders and the business community on a wide range of projects from community education programs for black youth to advising presidents Kennedy and Johnson on federal aid to cities. Some felt he had sold out to the white establishment, but his speech to the very “establishment” AIA was neither complimentary nor supportive; rather, it was a challenge to the profession to find a way to be useful to the large numbers of people affected by the built environment in negative ways.

Young noted that one cannot have lived in America and “not acquired prejudice” (Young 2003, 16) but went on to accuse architects, as a group, of notable and extreme neglect of the needs of marginalized groups and the poor. “As a profession,” he said, “you are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights, and I am sure this has not come to you as any shock. You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance” (16).

While Young’s comments were broad and scathing, they were also marked by gender and class assumptions of the time—that architects were male and middle or upper class. Although he addressed his audience “as citizens and as a professional group, and simply as men and women” (Young 2003, 10) (the group probably included wives and guests), later in the talk he speaks more directly to the architects in their

role as men, because I think this is probably more basic than anything. Sure, you’re architects. You’re a lot of things—you’re Republicans, Democrats, and a few John Birchers. You’re a good many things but you’re a man and you’re a father. I would hope that somehow you would understand that this issue, more than any other of human rights, today separates the phony from the real, the man from the boy, more than anything else. (20)

¹⁴ This talk probably occurred in May, when the AIA Convention usually takes place. If so, this was only a month or so after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. Whose idea was it to invite Whitney Young, Jr., and how did this come about? How was his talk received at the time?

Young was well placed to make these criticisms. In addition to his background in science and electrical engineering, he had also earned a master's degree in social work. He was named Dean of the School of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University in the late 1950s and, among his other roles, served as head of the National Association of Social Workers from 1969 until his death in 1971. He believed that the professions of social work and architecture both had a responsibility to provide services for disenfranchised and marginalized members of society.

To its credit, after Young's death in 1971 the AIA created an award in his honor as a person "who challenged the architectural profession to assume its responsibility toward current social issues"

("Practicing Architecture—Awards"). The award is for

an architect or architecturally oriented organization in recognition of a significant contribution toward meeting this responsibility. The type of social issue is purposefully flexible to remain eternally relevant. Current issues include, for example, housing the homeless/affordable housing, increased participation by minorities or women in the profession, access for persons with disabilities, and literacy.

Of the forty recipients since the award was first given in 1972, only three have been women—Norma Sklarek in 2008 (primarily a practicing architect), Sharon Egretta Sutton in 2011 (primarily an educator), and Ivenue Love-Stanley in 2014 (an architect in practice with her husband, William Stanley, who received the Whitney M. Young, Jr., Award in 1995). It has been given to organizations four times, but the majority of recipients have been male Fellows of the AIA,¹⁵ hardly a group of outsiders to the profession.

Critical insights about the limitations of the design fields in addressing the needs of blacks and the poor were not restricted to those of Whitney Young, Jr.'s stature. Two students in the architecture program at Howard University reviewed their fourth-year urban planning studio, taught during the fall 1968 semester, including radical reflections on their own evolving thought processes:

Being of colonial mentality, conceding that the white man knew all about planning, we proceeded to follow whitey's rules for planning. We read all the famous books on the topic. Something was wrong, but we couldn't figure it out. Finally we did. The books were written by whites for the designing of White America, and they conceded either all niggers belong in vertical concentration camps called Public Housing Projects, or whites can let them in a little at a time into their sterile sprawling suburbia. We threw away all those stupid racist books and looked out of the window of our studio, located in the Black inner city of Washington, and asked ourselves—what's wrong with our people's environment? The answer is simple—it was not designed for us and for our life style, and we are not in control of it. (Quintana and Jones 1969, 39).

¹⁵ It is not possible to ascertain the race or ethnicity of these individuals directly from information readily available on the AIA web site.

In their response to the design problem, they proposed communal and flexible dwelling spaces to serve the evolving extended family structure more typical of recent arrivals from rural areas, Black populations living in urban poverty, and communities that evolved from African precedents, in which unused spaces in one unit could be reconfigured for adjacent units that needed them. In their critique, like Whitney Young, Jr., Quintana and Jones expressed a rather traditional heterosexist and male-centric attitude, noting that in their version of communal living “four kitchens facing an internal commons is what mothers need in order to function in the kitchen and allow their brood to play with neighbor’s brood . . . at the same time, she may leave them out of sight with ease of mind if she knows that three other women are watching the children” (41).

Finally, Quintana and Jones disrupted their studio critique by inviting the former Black Panther Stokely Carmichael to their final review at the end of the semester, describing how

It is common practice for the faculty at Howard University to invite guest critics (mostly whites) to come in and help judge the fourth year problems since the problems deal mainly with urban development. These guest critics really come to see how these little monkeys perform. Since the faculty felt fit to invite all these irrelevant people to watch us perform, we decided to invite a person who we felt would be more relevant to the judging of whether or not we had designed a true urban community in light of the realities of present urban America. All the Uncle Toms in the faculty and the racist whites were shaken when Stokely Carmichael sat among them. Stokely had expressed apprehension at being asked to give critical comment at an architectural jury. The point that we told Stokely is that in order to discuss or be able to judge urban planning efforts all you have to know how to do, is to be relevant to the communities’ needs. We explained that urban planning is nothing but urban politics. Stokely was able to fit right into our general trend of thought once we had made our presentation. The point that we made to the whole jury is that first of all Black People have been fooled to think that only people with high-falutin degrees from Ivy League Schools can do planning. As far as Blacks are concerned those are the people that are the cause of their present planning dilemma. (Quintana and Jones 1969, 42)

There was also, at some schools, a distinct shift toward more interdisciplinary cooperation in design education, which, rather ironically, became a means for eliminating single-sex education for women. Earlier cross-disciplinary educational approaches used by the single-sex schools for women—partly based on philosophy and partly based on limited resources—were “discovered” by the mainstream and brought under the interdisciplinary approach favored by post-war philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, cultural critics like Lewis Mumford, and architecture and design theorists such as Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright in architecture. This did not escape the notice of Ellen Perry Berkeley, who wrote acerbically in 1980 that in the early part of the twentieth century “The Cambridge School was already pioneering in its integration of the study of architecture and landscape architecture—an important direction that would later

be ‘pioneered’ by Harvard in the 1940s” (Berkeley 1980, 207). But by 1960 the doors of the Cambridge School had been shuttered for more than fifteen years, and this growing interest in interdisciplinary design education contributed to the process that eventually wiped out the independent identity of the Lowthorpe Department of Landscape Architecture at RISD.

By the late 1960s, the profession of architecture was closing in on several decades of actively excluding women from both practice and the educational programs that led to practice. “In architecture, during the twenty years from 1950 to 1970, the proportion of women declined from 3.8 to 3.6 percent, although the profession itself was expanding during this time. Women went back to their homes, men back to business as usual” (Berkeley 1980, 209). During this period a number of women still managed to study and practice architecture, but seem to have succeeded by denying the significance of their sex, repudiating the idea of discrimination, and shaping their careers so as to not conflict with their husbands, their children, and their wifely duties (Smith 1989). While some of the city-based organizations for women designers still existed, the Association of Women in Architecture, the sole national architecture organization for women, ceased its existence in 1969 (Berkeley 1980, 208).

Planning as a field was still reeling from the failures of the large-scale proposals of the post-war years in both urban and metropolitan planning, effectively critiqued by Jane Jacobs (1961), and the field was trying to chart new directions for a society more and more interested in social issues. The number of students studying planning expanded tremendously in ten years—in 1973, there were around 5,000 students enrolled in planning (Corby and So 1974, in Perloff and Klett 1974), up from just under 1,000 in 1963.

These increased numbers also included larger percentages of minority and women students:

The proportion of minority students enrolled in planning schools is now roughly in line with their proportion in the population. In 1973, blacks comprised 13.3 percent of students enrolled, while other minorities made up some 3.7 percent. This is in drastic contrast to the situation just a few years earlier. Only nine blacks were reported to have received planning degrees in 1968 (amounting to 1.5 percent of the total degrees granted), as compared to 157 in 1973 (or 12.1 percent of the degrees granted). The number of females has also increased substantially. Women received 18.9 percent of the planning degrees granted in 1973, compared to 7.5 percent five years earlier. (Perloff and Klett 1974, 167-168)¹⁶

¹⁶ I find it interesting that in this essay, the authors point out that the percentage of “minority” students “is in line with the population at large” without performing this analysis on the numbers or percentages of women. And as usual in these sorts of data, people who belong to the categories of “minority” and “women” simultaneously are invisible.

In landscape architecture, large-scale regional planning was being critiqued for many of the same reasons as in architecture and planning. Renewed vigor in the field was supplied by the vision of Ian McHarg in his book *Design With Nature* (1969) and the accompanying film, neither of which argued for an end to large-scale design, but rather proposed basing it on careful analysis and use of ecological principles that incorporated better understanding of the land's natural resources, limitations, and innate carrying capacity. Although McHarg's work introduced a natural systems approach to land and site design that aligned with Earth Day 1970 and similar environmental concerns of its time (and that still fit right in with the early twenty-first century's concern for "green" design and sustainability), a close reading of his work reveals a hefty dose of racism, sexism, and homophobia.¹⁷

And although interior design remained a much younger sibling, this field too was aspiring to more professional status. The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) was created in 1975 through a merger of the two previously existing organizations, the American Institute of Decorators (AID) and the National Society of Interior Designers (NSID). A parallel development was the creation of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) by twelve African American architects (all male) who met at the AIA convention in 1971. NOMA is much smaller than the AIA, but is organized along very similar lines with national, local and student chapters, committees, and a national conference.

Environmental Design

In a context of political and social change and concerns about the environment, these critical social and environmental ideas began to coalesce into a new field called person/environment relations, which had the goal of bringing together a broad range of existing areas of the study of humans and their relationships to the built and natural environment. The concerns of this new field spanned from the scale of the individual to global natural systems, including approaches from psychology, geography, and architecture, among others. This new endeavor addressed "issues such as environmental deterioration, a housing crisis, and concerns about the quality of life" as "urgent and in need of scientific study and social change"

¹⁷ For example, McHarg argued in his film that urban overpopulation is detrimental to humans on the basis of the example that rats kept in crowded cages start to engage in "deviant" behavior such as homosexuality.

(Schneekloth 1994, 284). It also brought together many of those interested in the environment and its effects on people outside of the disciplines that produced licensed professionals.

This new field, which eventually took on the designation of environmental design, was characterized by a shift in focus from the organization and design of specific types of structures or spaces to the concerns of people and their perceptions of their surroundings. In part reacting to the “form and function” concerns of architectural modernism, environmental design was more interested in research, and how form was experienced by the users, rather than how it was envisioned or intended by the designers. Though it crosses other disciplines and comprises a number of subfields and research specialties, environmental design is broad rather than discipline-specific, and proudly multidisciplinary. Environmental design utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research to conduct user studies directed toward understanding how people experience their environments and how to identify problems and solve them from the perspective of the users of space and the public.

In 1969 the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) was created to bring together the various people working on these concerns. It was an outgrowth of the Design Methods Group that met for the first time at MIT in 1968, combined with the Special Interest Group on Civil Engineering, Architecture, (City, Regional, and Transportation) Planning, and Urban Data Systems of the Association for Computing Machinery (SIGCAPUS), and the Architectural Psychology Newsletter (Sanoff, 2010). This collection of “design professionals, social scientists, students, educators, and facility managers” intended to create a meeting ground for the “fringe dwellers of various disciplines and professions” (Moore, Hardie, and Sanoff 1989, 15, quoted in Schneekloth 1994, 284) as well as a supportive site for development of both academic interests and social goals. They wanted to bring academic research methods to utopian social agendas and goals, a project that has not always found a comfortable home in the academy.

Henry Sanoff wrote, “The early years of EDRA were marked by an unbridled optimism. There was a belief that a clear and conscious understanding of the design process coupled with a similar understanding of the methods and techniques used by the social sciences would provide the foundation necessary for ameliorating problems in the environment” (Sanoff 2010). However, this has resulted in “an uneasy coalition between the framework of science and those whose practice has been structured primarily

as a social movement” (Schneekloth 1994, 285), not to mention the difficulty of convincing members of the design professions of the value of both scientific research and social movements!

The “people” of concern to environmental design include whole categories of humans not always considered in planning or differentiated from the general public by those interested in formal design fields—children, the elderly, and those with disabilities; refugees and immigrants; women and mothers; people as individual human beings with lives, hopes, struggles—along with an interest in how design can help people with their lives and their problems. Some of the ideas on person/environment/behavior relations led to a behavioral focus in design exemplified by books such as *Personal Space: The Behavioral Basis of Design* by Robert Sommer (1969); *The House as Symbol of Self* by Clare C. Cooper (1971), and *Defensible Space* by Oscar Newman (1972).

Environmental designers developed interest in new areas of research such as post-occupancy evaluation, while also connecting to practitioners and academics interested in social planning, community-oriented design, and housing. And cultural issues were noted and prioritized early on, as many of these works were intended to address “the structure of experience as it is molded by culture” (Hall 1966, x).

Environmental design remains an umbrella term that includes multiple design activities, disciplines, and professions, and designates a somewhat loosely defined academic and scholarly enterprise linked with environmental psychology that has continued to develop over the last four decades both nationally and internationally. The doctoral programs in environmental psychology have produced a number of notable scholars who have tackled issues of difference, diversity, and discrimination in the design fields, including Sherry Ahrentzen (1996, 2003) Kathryn Anthony (2001), and Linda Groat (1993). In addition to their individual publications, these environmental design scholars have collaborated on many important studies of design teaching (Ahrentzen and Anthony 1993, Ahrentzen and McCoy 1996, Anthony and Grant 1993, Groat and Ahrentzen 1996, 1997).

When awareness of gender as a category of analysis “met up” with certain groups of people (mostly women) in the spatial design fields, environmental design provided an umbrella under which some of these ideas could be explored, discussed, and published. I hypothesize that this was because environmental design, as a field, was relatively new, young, and radical in its identity and orientation, and was perhaps less strongly associated with the male-identified and masculinist existing fields such as

architecture from which it was trying to differentiate itself. In addition, the creation of environmental design was motivated by some of the same utopian social ideals of the late 1960s and early 1970s, with which the women's movement was aligned. I would not yet argue that environmental design was always supportive of studies of women and feminist work, only that it was less negative toward them than most of the other available options (the field of women's studies was itself just forming).

The expansive realm of environmental design as a field provides the various types of people who identify with it opportunities to pursue wide-ranging interests and concerns related to "people" and "the environment," where both of these categories are conceived of in very broad ways. Environmental design's multidisciplinary participants and interdisciplinary practices allow for the possibility of innovative research, in-depth policymaking, creative educational practices, and new forms of social activism. By remaining a broad field with elastic boundaries, environmental design can engage in conventional academic research and policymaking while also retaining an interest in the people who use, inhabit, and are affected by environments, both natural and constructed. And because it is a field and discipline rather than a profession, environmental design has not had to erect boundaries to eliminate tasks, types of work, or people from within its borders.

At the same time, this flexibility and openness has allowed the concept and terminology of environmental design to be used and perhaps co-opted for some purposes perhaps not anticipated by those who created such a broad intellectual field. In relation to the professional education of architects and other designers, the degree designation of environmental design has become sort of a grab-bag of many different areas of study, not all of which incorporate either the research focus or the social awareness and social justice values held by the originators of the field.

Feminist Art

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, feminist art and feminist art criticism enjoyed a flowering of interest and expansion. Cooperative groups of women artists sprung up in New York and Los Angeles, as well as in some smaller cities. Many of these artists critiqued the social expectations of women's responsibilities for household chores and childrearing, and worked with ideas from women's traditional arts and culture such as sewing, quilting, knitting, and other forms of needlework. Judy Chicago, with a raft of

assistants, created her major early work, *The Dinner Party*, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles started her series of works on Maintenance Art. The world of feminist art also supported the growth of feminist teachers and critics, such as Harmony Hammond and Lucy Lippard. In the Los Angeles area, the first women's art program was created by Judy Chicago in 1970 at Cal State Fresno. It was followed by the CalArts Feminist Art Program, created by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. Their collaborative project of 1972, *Womanhouse*, led to the creation of *Womanspace*, a community art gallery and center (Lippard 1974). The *Woman's Building* opened in Los Angeles in 1973, home to nearly a dozen nascent feminist organizations including four galleries, two performance groups, a bookstore, a publisher, the office of the Los Angeles chapter of NOW, and the Feminist Studio Workshop, an art school founded by designer Sheila De Bretteville, painter Judy Chicago, and art historian Arlene Raven (Lippard, 1974, de Bretteville 1980).

Some historians criticize 1970s feminism for being predominantly white and middle-class in origin and focus, but writings of the time indicate awareness of race and class issues and concern about the limitations they had for feminist ideas and projects: "The Woman's Building is still primarily a middle-class institution, although its groups are exploring ways to open it to a more minority participation, among them a recent consciousness-raising dialogue with men and women from the Studio Watts Workshop and, projected for next year, the Feminist Studio Workshop's extension program of classes in the Los Angeles community" (Lippard 1974, 97).

Other feminist, women-only educational programs existed during this period (Bunch and Pollack 1983), including *Sagaris*, *Califia*, and the *Women's Writing Center*. In contrast to these activist and art-focused educational endeavors, WSPA had a national agenda and focused explicitly on the environmental design fields and professions. WSPA's philosophy, goals, and programs were all intended to express how women in architecture and planning at that time understood feminism and feminist values in relation to space, place, design of the environment, and their own professional fields.

Claiming Space for Women

The new ideas about race and gender that were circulating in the culture at large eventually extended to the design fields, where people began to connect these broader social critiques to space and design and the work of the professions. Discussion of racial discrimination and efforts to increase the

representation of racial minorities in the design and planning fields began in the late 1960s, slightly preceding efforts to provide more opportunities for women, which began in the early 1970s. Women in the environmental design professions were not immune to changes happening in society at large, and were not unaffected by the ideas of women's liberation. While the number of women in these fields was still small it was growing, and exposure to feminism outside the professions encouraged women designers, teachers, and students to seek each other out, creating the possibility of alliances and collective action. As women's rights and women's issues came to public prominence, awareness of women's issues in design erupted spontaneously in multiple locations around the country. This woman-focused energy expressed itself in three major ways: new publications and literature, establishment of professional organizations for women, and organization of conferences.

In 1972, three organizations for women design professionals were formed, apparently completely independently of each other: Women Architects, Landscape Architects, and Planners (WALAP) in Boston; Women's Architecture Review Movement (WARM), which later named itself the Alliance of Women in Architecture (AWA) in New York; and the Organization of Women Architects (OWA/DP) in San Francisco (Edelman 1989, 117). The Association of Women in Architecture continued to exist in Los Angeles.

In addition, the number of women teaching design was also growing, and in the context of women's liberation, women students and faculty could begin to see the value of collaborative projects relevant to both groups. Before long, women studying design at a number of schools began to organize conferences in different parts of the United States. In 1974 there were two conferences on women and minorities in design (St. Louis, Missouri; and Eugene, Oregon), and in 1975, three more (Los Angeles; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Boston).

The first of these conferences was the Women in Architecture Symposium of March 29-31, 1974, organized by three women students in the Department of Architecture at Washington University in St. Louis. At the time there were forty-seven women students in the school of architecture, or about fifteen percent of the total of 300 students.¹⁸ The purpose of the conference, according to the organizers, was to initiate an examination of trends and difficulties in education and the profession and begin a dialogue

¹⁸ "W.U. women architects hold symposium here," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 30, 1974.

between students and women architects. The conference was organized around three topics: 1) symbolic and theoretical implications of women as form creators; 2) professional considerations related to discrimination and sexism in both academia and the profession; and 3) the psychological aspects of working in a male-dominated field. They expected a modest number of local attendees but word spread rapidly and advance registration exceeded 350 people, including “women architects and students from almost every state and at least one from Stockholm, Sweden.”¹⁹

At the time, Elise Friedman, one of the organizers, wrote “We did not care to define any particular stand on the issue, because as students, we are still in the process of developing our identities both as architects and women. As a group, we are not militant feminists. This has not been an event to promote ‘women’s liberation’ as much as an event to promote some type of *dialogue* among women who happen to be in architecture.”²⁰ In hindsight, it is perhaps difficult to distinguish the attitudes of the organizers from what they chose to write in publicity materials and what was picked up by the mainstream architectural media; in any case, the public image of the conference was apolitical and nonthreatening. There were no “militant feminists” involved; there was no “women’s liberation” agenda—at least, officially.²¹ But the conference had significant effects. More than thirty years later, Elise said, “I remember the whole thing like it was yesterday. The changes in our school because of that event were phenomenal.”²²

The West Coast Women’s Design Conference took place less than two months later, April 18-20, 1974, at the University of Oregon in Eugene.²³ The following spring, March 20-21, 1975, a conference entitled “Women in Design: The Next Decade” was organized at the Women’s Building in Los Angeles, California. During the summer of 1975, an Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture program on Minorities in Design was held in Lincoln Nebraska, focusing on “issues of affirmative action.”²⁴ Finally, during the fall semester of 1975, another conference was organized at the Boston Architectural Center in

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Undated tear sheet from *Architecture Plus*, 1974, received from Elise Friedman Shapiro

²¹ By comparing different press accounts of the St. Louis conference, it appears that the title of Regi Goldberg’s keynote presentation actually included the word feminism, but that word was mentioned only in an article in a general-interest newspaper and not in the architectural press’s coverage of the event.

²² Personal communication with Elise Friedman Shapiro, March 16, 2005. It’s not clear whether proceedings of this event were produced, but Shapiro recalls that much of it was videotaped and believes that a compilation video was created.

²³ The organizers documented this conference in a 1975 publication, *Proceedings of the West Coast Women’s Design Conference, April 18-20, 1974*.

²⁴ The ACSA program on Minorities in Design in 1975 was briefly discussed in the *Proceedings of the West Coast Women’s Design Conference, 1975, 3*).

Boston, Massachusetts²⁵ (now Boston Architectural College). Many of the women who created WSPA or attended WSPA programs also participated in these conferences, creating a national community out of a series of regional events.

The founders of WSPA were among a large number of women in architecture, planning, and allied design fields who were exposed to the women's movement and were inspired to bring the ideas and organizational practices of feminism to their own fields. During this fertile period for feminist thinking about design, links were made across the boundaries of fields, partly to express new theoretical approaches to design and partly to expand these ideas to a larger potential audience. Consciousness-raising and activist projects had brought women all kinds of women together to discuss feminism and effect broad social change: Why couldn't these methods bring such ideas into the design fields? Widespread support for equal rights and discussions of changing women's role in the family were a heady impetus to try to change the male-dominated planning and design fields and expand women's roles in creating designed and built designed environments.

²⁵ See Nancy Harrod and Susan Naimark, *Proceedings of the Conference for Women in Design and Planning, Boston Architectural Center, November 7-9, 1975*.

Table 2: Design-related Professional Organizations

Field	Engineering	Architecture	Landscape Architecture	Planning (Urban and Regional)	Interior Design	Environmental Design	Minority architects
O*Net numbers '08	mech + civil = 517,000	141,000	27,000	38,000	72,000		
Major professional membership organization followed by annual membership fee(s) and other notes	NSPE (1934) National Society of Professional Engineers \$220 or \$128 for national only ASCE civil (1852) AIMMPE mining ++ ASME mech IEEE elec AIChE chem	AIA (1857) American Institute of Architects \$244 + 180 + 207 = \$631 (Chicago) 65,000 membership, 15% women	ASLA (1899) American Society of Landscape Architects \$322 + chapter membership (45-115)	APA (1978) [1917, 1909] American Planning Association APA + AICP = \$230-505 based on salary <i>Journal of the American Planning Association (JAPA)</i>	ASID (1975) American Society of Interior Designers \$430 [NSID (1957), AID (1931)] IIDA (1994) International Association of Interior Designers (\$465; architects can be members)	EDRA (1968) Environmental Design Research Association \$175	NOMA (1971) National Organization of Minority Architects \$220 + chapter membership 22 chapters, most city, some state
International			IFLA		IIDA (1994)	EDRA	
Regulate practitioners at national level	NCEES (1920) National Council of State Boards of Engineering Examiners	NCARB National Council of Architectural Registration Boards	CLARB Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards	AICP American Institute of Certified Planners (by APA)	NCIDQ National Council of Interior Design Qualifications	--	--
State boards	yes	yes	yes	no	some	--	--
Exam	NCEES (1920) National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying	ARE Architectural Registration Exam	LARE Landscape Architecture Registration Exam	AICP American Institute of Certified Planners (by APA)	NCIDQ National Council of Interior Design Qualifications	--	--
Students		AIAS	Student chapters	PSOs			NOMAS
Interns		IDP Intern Development Program			IDEP Interior Design Experience Program	--	
Continuing education		NCARB, AIA, state boards	CLARB			--	
Professional association for educators	ASEE (1893) American Society for Engineering Education (founded as SPEE)	ACSA (1911?) Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture JAE	CELA (1920?) Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture	ACSP (1959) Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning <i>Journal of Planning Education and Research (JPER)</i>	IDEC (1963) Interior Design Educators Council	EDRA	
Regulate programs of study	ABET, Inc. ACCE for construction ace-hq.org	NAAB (1940) National Association of Architectural Accreditation Boards	LAAB (???) Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board	PAB (1984) Planning Accreditation Board	FIDER (1970) Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research now CIDA (2006) Council for Interior Design Accreditation	[NASAD art and design]	
Research		ARCC			IDEC (1963)	EDRA	
National Academy	NAE (1964)					NAED (2009)	

Notes

\$ -- Fees listed are for the highest level of individual professional membership in each organization. There are no national organizations for women in architecture although a number of major cities have such groups: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York, and Boston. National sororities exist that include women in science, engineering, and architecture: Alpha Alpha Gamma, Phi Sigma Rho, Alpha Omega Epsilon

Abbreviations used in Table 2

Engineering

NSPE	National Society of Professional Engineers
ASCE	American Society of Civil Engineers
AIMPE	American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers
ASME	American Society of Mechanical Engineers
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
AIChE	American Institute of Chemical Engineers
NCEES	National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying
ASEE	American Society for Engineering Education
ABET, Inc.	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
ACCE	American Council for Construction Education
NAE	National Academy of Engineering

Architecture

AIA	American Institute of Architects
NCARB	National Council of Architectural Registration Boards
ARE	Architecture Registration Exam
AIAS	American Institute of Architecture Students
IDP	Intern Development Program
ACSA	Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture
NAAB	National Architecture Accreditation Board
ARCC	Architecture Research
JAE	

Landscape Architecture

ASLA	American Society of Landscape Architects
IFLA	International Federation of Landscape Architects
CLARB	Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Boards
LARE	Landscape Architecture Registration Exam
CELA	Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture
LAAB	Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board

Planning

APA	American Planning Association
AICP	American Institute of Certified Planners
JAPA	Journal of the American Planning Association
PSO	Planning Student Organization
ACSP	Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
JPER	Journal of Planning Education and Research
PAB	Planning Accreditation Board

Interior Design

ASID	American Society of Interior Designers
NSID	National Society of Interior Designers

AID	American Institute of Decorators OR American Institute of Interior Decorators OR American Institute of Interior Designers
IIDA	International Interior Design Association
NCIDQ	National Council of Interior Design Qualifications
IDEP	Interior Design Experience Program
IDEC	Interior Design Educators Council
FIDER	Foundation for Interior Design Research
CIDA	Council for Interior Design Accreditation

Environmental Design

EDRA	Environmental Design Research Association
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Minority Architects

NOMA	National Organization of Minority Architects
NOMAS	National Organization of Minority Architects Students

Accreditation

NASAD	National Association of Schools of Art and Design
NAED	National Academy of Environmental Design

Table 3: Percentage of Women in Design-related Professions

Field	Civil Engineering	Architecture	Landscape Architecture	Planning (Urban and Regional)	Interior Design
year of first professional organization in US	1852	1857	1899	1909/1917	1931
% women membership in major prof org in 2012 (approx)	15	20	24 (private sector) 24 academic 34 public	40	70-85

CHAPTER 4

WSPA: MAKING IT HAPPEN

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to tell the story of WSPA's founding and existence in a schematic format, establishing a framework of basic information on which to build my analysis for this dissertation, which follows in Chapter 5. While this chapter is abbreviated rather than comprehensive, my intention is to construct a chronological narrative that organizes the major "facts" about WSPA such as the people involved, dates, locations, and events, which can be further developed and amplified in later work. Considerable information about WSPA's intentions and formal programs was documented in contemporaneous articles co-published by Leslie Kanes Weisman and Noel Phyllis Birkby (1981, 1983), but this chapter reconstructs information about WSPA from the archival data and amplifies it with material from my interviews with the surviving founders.

The idea for WSPA sprang forth during the Women in Architecture Symposium at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, in March 1974.¹ According to several of those present, at an evening gathering of symposium attendees Leslie Weisman blurted out, "I'm not going to go home and leave this experience behind. We need to start a school."² A group of those present enthusiastically agreed, and initiated an intensive series of letters, memos, and meetings that eventually resulted in WSPA's first summer program in August 1975. Their first thoughts were of a school organized by women and for women, a "free space for self-actualization of the students and the faculty,"³ and most certainly not "one more place for the same old stuff."⁴ They soon expanded their concept to include the creation of a larger network of others with similar interests and goals, a supportive and flexible organization run by consensus,

¹ For additional information on this conference, visit <http://organizing-voices.tumblr.com/>. The original event brochure is available at http://library.wustl.edu/units/spec/archives/texts/Women-in-Architecture-Symposium_1974.pdf.

² This event was described almost identically by Leslie Kanes Weisman, Ellen Perry Berkeley, and Bobbie Sue Hood.

³ The School of the Women's Design Center, Draft 1, September 1, 1974, WSPA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts (hereafter cited as WSPA Records, SSC). When citing from original WSPA documents in Chapters 4 and 5, I have generally followed the spelling, grammar, and name conventions used by the writer or writers of each document, as I feel this more accurately conveys a sense of the complex, multi-authored nature of the entire enterprise.

⁴ Ellen Perry Berkeley memo to distribution list, October 23, 1974, WSPA Records, SSC.

and ambition to change the design professions in lasting ways. Their comprehensive plans were described in a list of goals that framed their activities during the next seven years:

- 1) To provide an opportunity to more fully integrate our values and identities as women with our values and identities as designers**
- 2) To discover and define the particular qualities, concerns, and abilities that we as women bring to our work**
- 3) To create our own national support network of women within and interested in the environmental design fields, thereby achieving an end to our isolation from each other**
- 4) To achieve a collective visibility and power base for ourselves within which to effect a change in priorities and practices within environmental design**
- 5) To offer a separatist experience for women which would be supportive and analytical of our unique experiences and our common concerns and perceptions as women within male-dominated fields**
- 6) To provide a forum within which to critically examine and redefine the nature of professionalism and professional practice**
- 7) To reevaluate the processes, priorities, and context of traditional education and to develop alternatives to them**
- 8) To decondition ourselves from our competitive male-defined and male-identified educations and to rediscover, validate, and affirm our processes as women**
- 9) To become a mobile community in which each WSPA session would be held in a different geographic location thereby maintaining flexibility, avoiding localization, reaching more women, preventing the institutionalization of either people or environment, and proving a unique experience each time**
- 10) To establish a structural framework within which the participants at the WSPA session would influence and participate in the evolution and direction of the school**
- 11) To develop an organization that would not be based on volunteerism⁵**

Some of these goals were specific to the design professions and others were drawn from the contemporary women's movement; together they shaped WSPA activities and remained the guiding principles of all WSPA programming.

Founders, Coordinators, and Teaching Coordinators

The founders of WSPA had a range of backgrounds and personal catalysts for collaboration in this project. The design fields they had been educated or involved in included architecture, urban planning, housing, interior design, journalism, furniture design, and cabinetmaking. They ranged in age from their

⁵ WSPA Goals, WSPA Records, SSC.

late twenties to their mid-forties, and they had been exposed to the 1970s women's movement and ideas of feminism in a variety of ways. They were enthusiastic about applying their skills as community organizers, project managers, architects and designers, educators, and journalists to the tasks of creating a new feminist organization to simultaneously manifest their vision of a supportive design community and their utopian ideas about education for women. This group of women had already encountered and engaged with the core ideas of feminism—gender equity for women and social justice in the broader society—from their parents, through their own education and employment in the design fields, and in the intense experiences of the United States women's movement of the late sixties and early seventies. As a group, they were skilled in conducting both the more internally focused practice of consciousness raising (CR) and the more externally focused tasks of activist organizing. It seemed natural to them to bring these strategies for creating change for women to their own professional fields of architecture, planning, and related design endeavors. In doing so, they were joining a multitude of women throughout the United States who were working together with their “sisters” to revision themselves, their families, and society as a whole (Ferree and Hess 1995, 2000; Rosen 2000; Evans 2003).

Over the 1974–1982 period of WSPA's active planning and programming, nearly 200 different women participated in the summer sessions and over 250 registered for the 1981 conference.⁶ The process of creating WSPA and keeping it going involved a group of women that changed over time as individuals' motivations and availability changed, and specific tasks were initiated and completed. The organizational structure the founders developed was meant to reduce hierarchy, eliminate “stars,” and create an egalitarian learning environment for all participants, yet a number of functional distinctions had to be made to facilitate the accomplishment of tasks and allocation of very limited funds for paying anyone.

⁶ These figures are difficult to ascertain precisely, as the records kept by different coordinators and for different purposes vary slightly. For example, the tally of participants based on session registration cards usually does not quite match the list of contact names and addresses, and not all years have registration cards; see Appendix D for a full list of participants and the years they attended WSPA programs. When the records were inconsistent, I chose to include names on this list, so my numbers may be a bit high but I believe they are generally accurate. The list of 1981 conference participants is drawn from a single document that is probably a list of registrants rather than actual attendees, but I did not find any documents relating to the 1981 conference akin to the registration cards used for other sessions that I could use to cross-reference this information.

Seven women brought the first session into reality: Katrin Adam, Ellen Perry Berkeley, Phyllis Birkby, Bobbie Sue Hood, Marie Kennedy, Joan Forrester Sprague, and Leslie Kanes Weisman.⁷ These women were referred to in later documents as Founders or Founding Members, and occasionally referred to themselves, with gentle humor, as Founding Mothers. These seven individuals were based in Boston, New York, Detroit, and San Francisco when they began working together. No more than four of them met at any event before they started the actual planning process, and the full group of seven did not meet in person until the start of the first session.⁸

The women responsible for planning each year's session were called *coordinators* while those who actually presented the core courses or other teaching activities were specified as *teaching coordinators*. Sometimes other women presented shorter courses or workshops and were referred to as "resource women," who were paid a small honorarium if funds were available. The number of women involved in planning each session was variable and constantly in flux with the result that documents produced at different times contained different lists, and the number of coordinators listed was sometimes much larger in early publicity materials for each year's program than the group that ended up as general coordinators in fact. The number of general coordinators varied considerably each year: seven in 1975; nineteen in 1976; twelve in 1978; and nineteen in 1979. The number of teaching coordinators was usually between six and eight, except for the 1980 session, which had only three.

Names of coordinators and teaching coordinators were included in the publicity brochure created for each session, but in keeping with the founders' commitment to the egalitarian goals of the contemporary women's movement and to avoid any development of a "star system," the coordinators' background and experience, affiliations, and accomplishments were presented collectively rather than individually. Publicity materials also avoided identifying specific course facilitators for each of the core courses based

⁷ From this point forward in Chapters 4 and 5, I generally refer to women who were members of the founding group by their full names or first names only. Other WSPA participants are identified by the full name they used at the time, as far as I can ascertain that from the archival records. In a number of cases, participants seem to have switched to a variant form of their first name, or added or dropped a hyphenated last name. Phyllis Birkby seems to have used her full name (Noel Phyllis Birkby) only for publications, so I have followed her practice and refer to her as Phyllis or Phyllis Birkby.

⁸ Kathryn Allott was part of the first year's group of session coordinators but withdrew in April 1975. At first she intended to participate during the first year as a "resource woman," but in the end, according to registration cards and participant lists, did not attend any sessions, in any role.

on the intention that participants make their choice of activities based on the course content and focus rather than on a specific coordinator's personality or "star" qualities.

Lack of operating funds was a continual challenge to the organizers' goal that WSPA not be a volunteer effort. Funds were extremely limited beyond what was absolutely necessary to cover the expenses of running the sessions, and what little was left over was retained as startup money for the next session. Despite the general shortness of financial resources, teaching coordinators were understood to have taken on an important level of responsibility and time commitment, and so did receive some benefits even when there were no funds to pay them. Teaching coordinators were not expected to pay tuition, room, or board for the session in which they held this role, and usually received some financial support toward their travel expenses.⁹ It was later agreed that former coordinators would pay one-quarter of the fees if they chose to attend later sessions, in part as recognition that their organizational contributions to WSPA were important, yet essentially unpaid.¹⁰

Katrin Adam

At the time she became involved in imagining and creating WSPA, Katrin Adam was thirty-seven years old. Originally from Munich, she had been educated in interior architecture and cabinetmaking in Germany before coming to the United States in 1965, where she was offered her first professional employment with the architecture firm Eero Saarinen and Associates in New Haven, Connecticut. She had already encountered hurdles in her studies in Germany:

I had experienced discrimination when I became a cabinet maker as part of my training. . . . I applied to the Hochschule fur Gestaltung (Institute of Design) in Ulm, Germany. The Institute's curriculums were based on those of the Bauhaus in Weimar and it required a one-year practical training in a craft before one was considered for acceptance. I chose cabinetry. This however became an enormous hurdle as none of the workshops in Munich wanted to train a woman in this field. In the end the Carpentry Guild Master was obligated to take me on, as requested by the city government with the provision that I brought my own hand tools to the shop, something not requested of the male apprentices. But once accepted I decided to do a full two and a half year apprenticeship with its final exam and so I became the first woman in Munich to become a journeyman in carpentry.¹¹

⁹ Reimbursement of travel funds for coordinators ranged from \$25 to \$300, depending on the distance and mode of transportation, and seldom covered the entire amount expended for travel.

¹⁰ Memo, August 30, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹ Katrin Adam, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, New York, New York, March 12, 2011.

Although Katrin was more involved in practice and more committed to developing an architecture practice of her own than some of the other WSPA founders, she was also aware of contemporary women artists and feminist discussions taking place in the art world. Katrin lived in Los Angeles during the early 1970s, and was involved with several of the Los Angeles feminist art groups associated with the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), which included the Feminist Art Program, the Feminist Studio Workshop, Womanspace gallery, and Womanhouse, a conceptual art installation. She participated in CR groups with Miriam Schapiro, Sheila de Bretteville, and other central figures of the West Coast women's art movement of that time. These influences didn't so much inform her about gender issues as convince her that they existed in the United States as well as in Germany, and helped to catalyze her understanding of them as relevant to her field:

Women power was not unfamiliar to me. As a young child, at the end of the second World War, and after the war when there were few men—they had either died or had become prisoners of war—it was women who picked up the pieces to assure that they and their children that had survived were nourished and educated. Some issues raised in the consciousness raising group were unfamiliar to me having had a different history and cultural upbringing, but of course, when the situation in Germany normalized, I did experience discrimination like other women in the group had.¹²

Of her time in the feminist arts community in Los Angeles, she later wrote “How could I have avoided getting involved in the Women's Movement when surrounded by women like Judy Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, Sheila de Bretteville, Deborah Sussman and other powerful women there, many of whom were in my consciousness-raising group? The seeds were taken back to New York where I met Leslie, Phyllis, and Ellen and later Joan, Marie, and Bobbie Sue. The result is evident.”¹³ When Katrin and her partner returned to New York in 1972, it was natural for her to try to reestablish the support she had found in California by seeking out other women in the design fields who shared her feminist values.

Ellen Perry Berkeley

In the early 1970s Ellen Perry Berkeley was in her mid-forties, a writer who had begun a career in architectural journalism in part through the recommendation of Jane Jacobs, an influential critic of mid-twentieth century American city planning. Ellen had studied architecture at Harvard after graduating from Smith College, but never finished the master's degree: “At twenty-one, I married a twenty-three-year-old

¹² Ibid.

¹³ WSPA Alumnae Directory and Reunion Album, 1975-2002, 2, WSPA Records, SSC.

architect and headed into architecture school and a lifelong collaboration with my husband. I soon closed out both ventures. Not before a professor at Harvard sneered at me, over my drafting board, ‘You’d have put everyone’s time to better use if you’d stayed at home and warmed your husband’s bed.’”¹⁴ In 2007 she repeated this story in her interview with me, adding, “I didn’t know what to say to him. I should have said, ‘Could you say that a little louder please?’ I could have said any number of things . . . That was 1955, I guess. Who knew what to do?”¹⁵ The dissonance continued later while Ellen and her husband lived in England, where she studied at the Architectural Association in London. Her professors encouraged her to continue her studies while her husband was unenthusiastic.

On returning to the United States, Ellen ended up doing some part time work for Jane Jacobs on Jacobs’ groundbreaking book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). She decided to pursue writing instead, and ended up working for *Progressive Architecture* and eventually the journal *Architectural Forum*. Peter Blake, the editor, gave her free rein to pursue the topics that interested her, and she wrote on whatever she found interesting: “all sorts of things, architecture, planning, toys, etc.”¹⁶ Her experiences as a student at Harvard resonated with social changes occurring at the time and influenced her work. In 1970 Ellen wrote an article for *Architectural Forum* on “Minorities in the Professions” (Berkeley 1970), in which she discussed a wide variety of programs that had been created by schools, firms, and professional organizations to support minority architects and students, including efforts that reached into the public schools to generate young people’s interest in design as a career. She followed this in 1972 with “an angry article”¹⁷ on “Women in Architecture” (Berkeley 1972), describing the experiences of both the older generation of women in the field, who had never spoken out about discrimination they had experienced, and younger women, who were far less tolerant of the challenges they were finding both in school and in the workplace. It was, she concluded “a time of great awareness among women—and great anger. It is also a time of great creative ferment.” (Berkeley 1972, 53) This article became widely known and opened up public discussion of these issues among women in design.

Ellen knew many women in architecture and design through her professional networks, including Phyllis and Joan, and was a co-founder of the Alliance of Women in Architecture in New York City. After

¹⁴ Ellen Perry Berkeley, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, Shaftsbury, Vermont, November 21, 2007.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

her time at *Architectural Forum*, Ellen moved on to *Architecture Plus*, where she was responsible for that journal publishing a chapter on the Cambridge School from Doris Cole's recently published book, *From Tipi to Skyscraper* (1972). She also wrote another essay on women and architecture, originally commissioned by *Ms.* magazine, "but then when it was finished, a half a year or maybe a year later, something had changed at *Ms.* and they didn't want it any more" because "they thought things weren't far enough along. Isn't that ridiculous?"¹⁸ The research she had conducted for that piece eventually resulted in three book chapters in edited collections: *Modern Social Reforms*, edited by Arthur B. Shostak (Berkeley 1974); *Feminist Collage*, edited by Judy Loeb (Berkeley 1979); and *New Space for Women*, edited by Gerda R. Wekerle, Rebecca Peterson, and David Morley (Berkeley 1980).

By 1974, Berkeley had been a senior editor at *Architectural Forum* and *Architecture Plus*, but these two journals had folded or were close to it. She taught writing in the architecture programs at Columbia University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Washington, and presented shorter workshops at many other schools, but had already launched her freelance writing life that resulted in the publication of several books and many articles. Her association with other women in design led to her involvement with WSPA, and she threw an enormous amount of energy into creating and supporting this new endeavor for women in design. She also remarried and moved with her new husband to southern Vermont into a house she had designed, which was the site of a number of important WSPA meetings and served as WSPA's East Coast mailing address for several years.

Noel Phyllis Birkby

Phyllis Birkby (1932–1994), at forty-two, was a registered architect in New York and the WSPA founder with the greatest exposure to radical feminist ideas and strategies.¹⁹ As a teenager Birkby had been discouraged from studying architecture, but eventually earned a certificate in architecture at Cooper Union in 1963, when she was thirty-one years old. She went on to complete a master's degree in architecture at

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Information about Phyllis Birkby's life is primarily from the Finding Aid of the Phyllis Birkby Papers, 1932–1994, which are in the Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts (hereafter abbreviated as Birkby Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College). Birkby's personal papers include records of her own life in architecture and an immense amount of documentation she assembled on the women's movement of the 1970s. This Finding Aid was written by Maida Goodwin, who processed both the Birkby Papers and the WSPA Records, and hereafter cited as Birkby Finding Aid, SSC.

Yale in 1966, where she was one of only six women among the 200 students in her program. From then until the early 1970s she worked at Davis Brody and Associates, a prominent New York City architecture firm. Though successful in her work, Birkby struggled to reconcile her then-bisexual identity with her professional life. She knew about the growing women's movement but didn't see its relevance to her own circumstances, believing the movement was "mostly about housewives in the suburbs."²⁰ But in May 1970, her lover attended the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York and returned "with a report of how a group of lesbian feminists called the Lavender Menace had disrupted the Congress with a presentation about discrimination against lesbians in the women's movement."²¹ Birkby made the connection—"Finally feminism had some meaning for me. I was no longer invisible. I was part of a bona fide feminist issue."²²

Birkby promptly defined herself as a lesbian, joined a CR group, and read everything she could find on women's liberation. Soon she was invited to join CR Group One, a New York City group made up of influential feminist theorists and writers including Kate Millet, Sidney Abbott, Barbara Love, and Alma Routsong (known by her pseudonym Isabel Miller). As a member of that group, Phyllis contributed to highly visible, radical and activist projects of various kinds. In 1971, she participated in the occupation of an abandoned city-owned building on East 5th Street in New York, where her CR group created a temporary women's community center. In 1972, she quit her job at Davis Brody, came out publicly as a lesbian, and began to move away from her former "male defined and dominated" professional career in architecture and toward a multifaceted life comprised of teaching and private practice, writing, and "documenting the thriving women's culture of the 1970s through film, video, photography, oral history, and the collection and preservation of pamphlets, posters, manifestos, clippings, and memorabilia."²³ She coedited *Amazon Expedition: A Lesbian Feminist Anthology*, which included radical feminist essays by Ti-Grace Atkinson, Esther Newton, and Bertha Harris.²⁴ She started a series of "environmental fantasy workshops" in which women were asked to imagine their ideal environments and living conditions, and

²⁰ Birkby Finding Aid, SSC. In this attitude Birkby was not unlike many bisexual and lesbian women of the period who had as yet no visible movement and were put off by the heterosexism and homophobia of the mainstream women's movement. For more on this, see Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp 164-175.

²¹ Birkby Finding Aid, SSC. For more on this event, see Rosen (2006).

²² Birkby Finding Aid, SSC.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Phyllis Birkby, Bertha Harris, Jill Johnston, Esther Newton, and Jane O'Wyatt, eds, *Amazon Expedition: A Lesbian Feminist Anthology* (New York: Times Change Press, 1973).

tried for years to get the material she collected in these workshops published.²⁵ She participated in founding the Alliance of Women in Architecture, a professional organization in New York City for women architects, and was prominent in one of that group's early projects, the Archive of Women in Architecture, where she met some of the other women who cofounded WSPA.

And somehow, Phyllis knew that there had been an architecture school exclusively for women earlier in the century—the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. In the separatist atmosphere of the 1970s, she imagined a new school for women that had no men in charge, even well-intentioned and supportive ones: “It has been a private and long-time fantasy of my own to see a women’s school run by women and evolved by women that was different from the women’s colleges of the pasts—which were usually run by men as many of them are still. Even the Cambridge School of Architecture (for women) was run by a man and this is the first time I think we have anything close to that fantasy coming true.”²⁶

Bobbie Sue Hood

In the early 1970s Bobbie Sue Hood was an architect in San Francisco, interested in urban design and energy-efficient building design. Bobbie Sue had grown up in the South and ended up managing many of the household tasks to help her mother after her father died when she was quite young. She graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1961 and was strongly influenced by reading *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan 1963), which helped her understand that she “had tremendous strengths which had previously been viewed as just not fitting into the mold I was supposed to.”²⁷ During that time she developed an interest in “all those terrible urban renewal projects of the sixties that generated a lot of movement in the planning field,” read Jane Jacobs, and decided that she needed to go back to school for an advanced degree “because women need to be credentialed even more than men.”²⁸ She was initially drawn to the strong technical

²⁵ Many of these workshops were conducted with Leslie Kanes Weisman, including some that took place at WSPA sessions.

²⁶ Leslie Kanes Weisman and Phyllis Birkby, the Women’s School of Planning and Architecture (WSPA) Background Facts, Quotes Section, WSPA Records, SSC (hereafter cited as Weisman and Birkby, WSPA Background Facts). This appears to be the final draft of the manuscript that was eventually published as “The Women’s School of Planning and Architecture,” in *Learning Our Way: Essays in Feminist Education* (1985), ed. Charlotte Bunch and Sandra Pollack (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press).

²⁷ Bobbie Sue Hood, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, San Francisco, California, February 6, 2012.

²⁸ Ibid.

curriculum in architecture at Carnegie Mellon, which she attended from 1966 to 1968, but eventually transferred to the University of California at Berkeley, where she graduated with a Master of Architecture degree in 1971. During the early 1970s she was involved in starting the Organization of Women Architects and Design Professionals (OWA) in San Francisco as well as being active in the San Francisco chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) because she felt strongly that “if you’re going to be really successful getting women’s rights and women’s perspective into architecture” you have to “come along the regular path.”²⁹ She also participated from a distance in some of the Los Angeles groups and activities such as the Association for Women in Architecture (AWA; now Association for Women in Architecture and Design [AWA+D]).³⁰

Bobbie Sue saw a flyer about the St. Louis conference that she thought had “wonderful graphics,” unlike many other feminist endeavors, and decided to attend.³¹ This conference was as exciting for her as for the other participants: “At that time there were so few women architects that there was a substantial proportion of us in St. Louis and that’s where I met Leslie and Phyllis and Joan and many people and it became the hub or the start of our national network.” She was present when “Leslie said, ‘We have to have a school. We have to start a school.’ And so I thought ‘That’s crazy – let’s do it!’”³² She was disappointed to discover later that the graphics she had admired were inspired by a painting by Picasso, when “nobody could have been more sexist.”³³ Although Bobbie Sue supported the comprehensive list of WSPA goals, for her, the main purpose of WSPA was “helping women become really terrific architects, or architectural historians, or teachers or whatever they wanted.”³⁴ This resulted in some tension between her and other founders when she felt they concentrated more on creating a comfortable group process and a safe social environment than on helping women develop the skills they needed to enter the professions.

Bobbie Sue’s participation in WSPA was complicated by her location on the West Coast, far away from the majority of the other founders. Despite the difficulties created by geographical distance, she was a

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Later in her career Bobbie Sue became disillusioned with feminist efforts to change the design fields, and chose instead to focus on hiring women as employees in her own firm and supporting women in becoming members of municipal committees and boards on which they could influence the hiring of women-owned design firms.

³¹ Bobbie Sue Hood, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, San Francisco, California, February 6, 2012.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

teaching coordinator for the 1975 session in Biddeford, Maine, where she presented a course on urban design. She was also centrally involved in organizing the 1976 session in Santa Cruz, although not an official session coordinator or teaching coordinator for that session. Like Katrin, Phyllis, and Joan, Bobbie Sue was a practicing architect and brought the knowledge and skills of a practitioner to WSPA, although she was also, at the time, very supportive of women's involvement in other types of feminist groups and projects.

Marie Kennedy

Marie Kennedy's path to becoming one of the founders of WSPA included work in the fields of both architecture and planning. Marie had earned an undergraduate degree from the University of California at Berkeley in political science and graduated from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design with a degree in architecture in the late 1960s. After completing her degree, she was involved in "several jobs all at once" because she was "trying to figure out what I wanted to do."³⁵ These jobs included working for an architect on housing for migrant farm workers in Western Massachusetts, working on a regional project for Cape Cod, and working with the Urban Field Service, a program started by Chester Hartman at Harvard, "through which groups of students or individual students sometimes, were placed with community labor organizations to learn and earn academic project while doing a real project."³⁶ Marie was hired, in part, to make connections between the Urban Field Service and the Harvard Department of Architecture. In 1969 Marie became Assistant Director of the Urban Field Service, where she was the "only woman and the only lecturer."³⁷ She and Chester supported the Harvard student strike of 1969 and as a result their contracts were not renewed.

Marie then moved to a position at Urban Planning Aid, a sort of sister organization to the Urban Field Service, where she did anti-urban renewal community organizing and, with a colleague, organized the first statewide public tenant housing union in Massachusetts. Her other early employment experience included stints with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, construction supervision on a rehab project, and employment in an architecture office. In all of these settings, Marie was "pretty much the only woman,"

³⁵ Marie Kennedy, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, June 12, 2008.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. Her title as Lecturer rather than Assistant Professor indicated the lowest rank in faculty status, lower than the male faculty she worked with in this position.

and as a student at Harvard, had been one of only two women in her class.³⁸ In the early 1970s Marie worked with Joan Forrester Sprague to create a number of organizations in Boston including the Women's Design Center, an organization of women supporting each other in developing feminist projects, and Women Architects, Landscape Architects, and Planners (WALAP), a Boston-area professional organization for women in these related fields. Marie also joined Joan and her colleagues at the Open Design Office, a non-hierarchical practice of women architects and planners in Cambridge, Massachusetts at which many of the principles for running WSPA were developed and practiced.

Marie brought a broad knowledge of social issues and community organizing to WSPA, as well as a strong wish to create environments for women to learn with and work with other women, since this had been so rare in her personal experience. In 1972, Marie had a daughter, and was the only one of the WSPA founders to be a parent at that time. Although the need for WSPA meetings and programs to accommodate mothers with children was recognized by the entire group, at least on a theoretical level, childcare was never provided at meetings, although it was eventually provided at the summer sessions. During the first year of WSPA's existence, it was Marie who prompted action rather than rhetoric on this topic.

Joan Forrester Sprague

At the time that WSPA appeared in its creators' minds, Joan Forrester Sprague (1935–1998), was almost forty. She had earned a degree in architecture from Cornell in 1953, after which she designed furniture and worked as a consultant to a number of large design firms in the Boston, Massachusetts area.³⁹ Like many of the other women involved with WSPA, Joan was instrumental in the creation of a number of new organizations to meet women's needs, including the Open Design Office (with Marie Kennedy) in Cambridge, the Women's Design Center and the Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development, Inc., both in Boston; and later on, the Women's Development Corporation in Providence, Rhode Island (with Katrin Adam and Susan Aitcheson), which still exists.

In the mid-1970s Joan was working on a master's degree in education at Harvard with a concentration in organizational development, which she completed in 1976. Joan was particularly

³⁸ Marie Kennedy, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, June 12, 2008.

³⁹ Finding Aid, Joan Forrester Sprague Papers, 1935-1998, 88-M103—98-M166, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (hereafter cited as Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library).

interested in alternative types of businesses and ways of organizing firms, and she used a number of papers for her Harvard courses as opportunities to analyze the organizations she had been involved in developing as well as process WSPA events and challenges as they happened. During WSPA's first several years, she and a number of others were very inspired by some writings on food coops and on revisioning work environments by William Ronco, at that time a doctoral student in urban studies and planning at MIT, which he eventually published as a book called *Jobs: How People Create Their Own* (1977). Around the time that WSPA was created, Joan wrote several papers on the designer's creative process and using the skills of a designer to develop new strategies for work. "As a result of my dissatisfaction with work setting available to me and conversations with other women architects who had similar dissatisfactions and perhaps more importantly similar needs, it seemed appropriate to 'design' an office organization using a similar method."⁴⁰ In another paper she said that her experience in "designing" an office practice was a "reinforcing experience for me. It led to my involvement in 'designing' a school in much the same way."⁴¹ As a consequence of Joan's experience in creating alternatives to traditional forms of architecture and planning practice, she was sometimes more aware than others of the pitfalls of "alternative" and utopian schemes, even when she was supportive of the goals. Joan was also more comfortable than some in communicating her opinions and perspective on organizational development during WSPA's nascent process of growth, which was often useful to the group, although sometimes uncomfortable for others.

Leslie Kanes Weisman

In 1974, Leslie Kanes Weisman was in her late twenties and the youngest of the group of WSPA founders. She had a wide variety of interests in college, some of which coalesced around what is now the field of environmental psychology, but she didn't really fit into any program that existed at the time. "I'd go to the psychology department and they'd say, 'that's all design,' and I'd go to the design department and they'd say, 'that's all psychology.'"⁴² After a lot of searching, she ended up studying architecture, though she never became licensed or practiced, instead pursuing a career in architectural education after obtaining a teaching position in the School of Architecture at the University of Detroit in the late 1960s. At the time

⁴⁰ Joan Forrester Sprague essay, 1975, in *The Women's School of Planning and Architecture Background Facts*, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Leslie Kanes Weisman, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, Southold, New York, March 13, 2012.

she was also newly married, involved in civil rights and feminist politics, “founding a NOW chapter . . . and up to my neck in a CR group,” all the while wondering how she would be able to combine her personal values and beliefs in feminism with the work she was pursuing in teaching.⁴³ She was invited to attend the 1974 conference in St. Louis to participate in a panel on role conflicts experienced by women in architecture and, like others at the conference, was “euphoric with the experience of being in an environment in which you were so understood and there was so little need to be defensive about anything, or careful and cautious.”⁴⁴ Within a year she had left her husband, left the University of Detroit for a position as a founding faculty member of the new School of Architecture at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and was living with Phyllis in New York City, where she met many other women in design and became involved in other organizations of women in architecture, such as the Alliance of Women in Architecture.

Like the other WSPA founders, Leslie was highly energetic and thrived on the commitment needed to create all aspects of a new organization, from developing its overall philosophy to working out the final details. She described herself as “a pretty effective organizer” who committed herself to doing “whatever it takes to get it done, I didn’t care how many hours, I didn’t care what else I had to do, I decided that WSPA would be my priority.”⁴⁵ She was one of the early WSPA participants most involved in architectural and design education at the time, and for Leslie, WSPA proved to be a liberating environment where she was free to experiment with developing new content and forms of pedagogy. Leslie continued this focus throughout her professional career, developing a number of innovative feminist teaching strategies in both studio and non-studio design courses (Diaz 1998). These early experiences shaped her interests and areas of contribution to WSPA and to a multitude of other progressive and activist efforts in design education. While supporting the development of WSPA as a whole, and being involved in almost every aspect of planning and implementation for its entire active existence, her personal research focused on developing a feminist critique of design education and the social construction of gendered space, which culminated in the publication of her book, *Discrimination by Design: A Feminist Critique of the Man-Made Environment*, in 1992, and “Diversity by Design: Feminist Reflections on the Future of Architectural

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Education and Practice” in *The Sex of Architecture*, which she co-edited with Patricia Conway and Diana Agrest in 1996.

Planning the First WSPA Session

Planning for the first WSPA session took place between the St. Louis conference in March 1974 and August 1975, when participants arrived at St. Francis College in Biddeford, Maine, ready to experience this alternative form of design and planning education. It was an enormous project, but the women who were involved in creating WSPA were not only committed feminists, many of them were seasoned activists, and had years of relevant work and life experience to bring to the tasks of making WSPA a reality. All had design or planning education; some had been employed in professional planning and architectural offices; others had been involved with architectural journalism and publicity, several had been involved in design and planning education as faculty; and all of them had created or been participants in the other feminist and women’s design organizations of the time.

The excitement and enthusiasm of the St. Louis conference spread rapidly. After the conference Leslie, Marie, and Joan wrote a memo laying out their concept for the school and mailed it to a small group of others they knew had similar interests. These women responded and the memo writing intensified as they worked to develop their ideas about women and design and integrate their feminist philosophies into reality.⁴⁶ Since most of the participants were located between Boston and New York, monthly in-person meetings were held in that region, beginning in May and June of 1974 and continuing through the following year.

This dedicated group of women brought their collective set of skills as well as enormous energy and enthusiasm to the many challenges of manifesting their vision of a women’s feminist design school. They wrote memos and letters, developed meeting agendas, held numerous meetings that sometimes lasted an entire weekend, kept voluminous notes and minutes, organized newsletters, and began to create the support network they envisioned. Occasionally, when emotions ran high, they interrupted their formal meetings to hold a CR session, for which notes were not kept. In the days before nearly instant Internet

⁴⁶ The distribution list during the first year of planning varied considerably from one memo or set of meeting minutes to another. At times it included as many as fourteen women, but by around February 1975 it consistently included only the eight women who intended to carry out the 1975 session (Kathryn Allott dropped out of this group in late spring).

communication, the women who founded WSPA relied primarily on personal contacts and the written word to develop and convey their ideas to one another. Phone calls were expensive and therefore saved for important and pressing needs, such as making the final decision about renting a facility for the summer program. The entire enterprise was perennially short of funds, and participants made the most of what they could provide out of their own pockets or that they were able to scrounge from their employers, usually without the employer's knowledge or approval.⁴⁷

The group's ideas about both the form and content of the school evolved through several phases, generally trending from the most idealistic to the more practical and achievable. At first they envisioned a summer school of four to six weeks duration,⁴⁸ then reduced this to a plan for three to four weeks, and finally, the first session was two weeks in length. Along with planning for the first session, there was much discussion of working within a national network that would include women in other regions and cities who were discussing similar ideas at the same time. Sheila de Bretteville, one of the founders of the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, wrote a lengthy letter suggesting that WSPA coordinate with the Feminist Studio Workshop in the Woman's Building to create a larger network in a "mutually advantageous relationship."⁴⁹ Most of these ideas turned out to be overly ambitious as well.

The first concrete idea for WSPA's structure was to establish a school of "architecture, design and allied professions and trades"⁵⁰ through an association with the Women's Design Center (WDC) in Boston, a feminist design group that Joan and Marie had been involved in organizing in the early 1970s. The school was to be by and for women only, national in scope, mobile in location, and based on an "entirely different kind of class 'scheduling' than the traditional ones and 'multiple' campuses and locations."⁵¹

Unfortunately, the WDC bylaws allowed only Boston residents to become members. Attempts were made to change this, but trust between the WDC and WSPA groups was difficult to establish and outside of Joan and Marie, other members of the WDC were not supportive of this new collaboration. Joan wrote that "defining this [new] membership possibility proved to be a time consuming, emotional and ultimately

⁴⁷ Employer resources that WSPA founders "scrounged" for their cause included photocopying, stamps, other office supplies, and when possible, use of long-distance telephone services.

⁴⁸ The School of the Women's Design Center, Draft 1, September 1, 1974, WSPA Records, SSC. The original plan for a program of four to six weeks may have been following the lead of Sagaris, which held two five-week sessions at Goddard College in Vermont during the summer of 1975 (Bunch 1983).

⁴⁹ Sheila de Bretteville letter to Joan, Leslie, and Phyllis, July 23, 1974, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁵⁰ Memo to distribution list, September 2, 1974, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁵¹ Ibid.

impossible effort,”⁵² and eventually a decision was made not to have the new school associated with the WDC in any way. Joan reflected on this in one of her graduate school papers: “I have learned that new alternatives are probably best set up outside ‘parent’ alternatives as well as outside the establishment institutions.”⁵³

In addition to the multipage memos and occasional phone calls, the group met in person on a regular basis, at least monthly, at different people’s houses. The meetings tended to be lengthy, sometimes lasting an entire weekend, and incorporated group process techniques of the time including brainstorming and CR. Ellen provided space for several of these meetings at her house in Shaftsbury, Vermont: “We had long weekends. . . . People spread out on the floor and a couple people took a motel room, but mostly, we were here for about two or three days. And we were having brainstorming sessions. I think Leslie had one of these great newspaper pads and you wrote down every stupid thing that everyone said ‘cause you weren’t going to critique . . . at that point, you’d go through it later. And we decided the basic stuff and who was going to do what for the opening session.”⁵⁴ Many decisions remained in flux for months, but by the end of 1974 eight likely coordinators had been identified, several possible locations for the session were under serious consideration, and the eventual name for the school had been proposed by Leslie, Joan, and Phyllis: the Women’s School of Planning and Architecture.⁵⁵

In February 1975 a memo from Leslie to the seven other coordinators took this complicated and multifaceted process in hand and established a plan for getting things done. First, Leslie pointed out that it was “senseless to go over the sequence of events (also too confusing) surrounding how we got to where we are now with the school.”⁵⁶ Next, she summarized what had been accomplished so far, listed the remaining tasks, laid out individual and committee assignments based on geographical locations, and suggested that if these goals “seem to be ok, then we can all get busy. Let me know your acceptance, changes, rejections, etc.”⁵⁷ The idea of documenting the school was generated around this time, an outgrowth of the group’s

⁵² Joan Forrester Sprague essay, 1975, in *The Women’s School of Planning and Architecture Background Facts*, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Ellen Perry Berkeley, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, Shaftsbury, Vermont, November 21, 2007.

⁵⁵ Leslie Kanes Weisman memo to coordinators, February 2, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

desire to document important “herstory”⁵⁸ and produce materials that could be used to evaluate and publicize the school, as well as a book they could sell to raise funds for future programs.⁵⁹

Despite the group’s commitment to a consensus-based process, in light of the need to make timely progress on these ambitious plans in order to have a session in 1975, Katrin, Ellen, Phyllis, and Leslie agreed on a work process that gave considerable authority to the individual who took on the responsibility of getting something done. Inevitably these goal-directed efforts were interwoven with misunderstandings and conflicts. Due to the large number of people involved in the planning, their different locations, and the complexities of interpersonal communication under the time pressure of planning a session for that year, there were bumpy periods and hurt feelings. They periodically used CR sessions to address these, but the compressed time frame for planning meant that there was seldom enough time to fully work things through.

Joan periodically reflected on WSPA events through the lens of her academic studies in organizational development. Around the end of 1974 she travelled to the University of Oregon to teach for a brief period. During that time, she received material about WSPA’s planning process from others in the group of coordinators that she found confusing. She consulted with another coordinator and with that woman, wrote a joint response to the larger group. She wrote in one of her papers, “I arrived back in the east to find that two writers of the material to which we responded were greatly offended by me. I worked hard to mend fences but was also very hurt by their misunderstanding of my response.”⁶⁰ The time pressure meant that the planning process had to continue, but the interpersonal tensions continued as well: “We had two additional meetings before the school session. I could sense competition rising between coordinators. We talked about the difficulties of long-distance consensual decision making. I was still uncomfortable with those who had criticized me earlier. It seemed impossible to discuss this in a group—there was always too much work to be done. It was clear at this time that commitment to the actualization of the school was the top-most priority. In retrospect I wonder if this was wise, if time should not have been found for confirming supportiveness of one another.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ “Herstory” was a term used during the 1970s women’s movement to emphasize the need to reclaim and document women’s place in “his-story”—that is, documentation of the past by and about men and men’s accomplishments.

⁵⁹ Leslie Kanes Weisman memo to coordinators, February 2, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁶⁰ Joan Forrester Sprague essay, 1975, in *The Women’s School of Planning and Architecture Background Facts*, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

During the spring of 1975 completion of tasks related to the school speeded up further, by necessity. A venue was found and agreed upon, the site was visited in person, a public announcement of the upcoming program was made in mid-March, and the month of April was spent coordinating and printing the catalog. Publicity about the forthcoming session was extensive, with brochures and press releases sent to United States, European, and other international architecture and planning schools, US landscape architecture departments; women's colleges, campus women's studies departments and centers; women's community organizations; and feminist bookstores, journals, and magazines. Brochures were also distributed to those involved in WSPA planning for them to distribute among their personal networks. A WSPA newsletter was initiated, which continued to be produced approximately twice a year until 1980. The founders' involvement with other women and design activities continued, and Leslie, Phyllis, and Ellen attended the conference held at the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, returning to New York with new ideas and continuing enthusiasm for the upcoming WSPA session in August.

WSPA Events, 1975-1981

The Women's School of Planning and Architecture Summer Session

2 weeks: August 10-23, 1975

St. Francis College, Biddeford, Maine⁶²

The publicity brochure for WSPA's first session was the concrete manifestation of the lengthy planning process that had taken over a year. It stated clearly that WSPA was "for women only."⁶³ No specific academic credentials were required, but it was "expected that all participants will have made a commitment in prior work or study to planning/architecture/environmental design."⁶⁴ Enrollment was limited to sixty women, with the first fifty places assigned on a first-come first-served basis and the final ten places given to those "who can bring to the group the balance necessary for the widest variety of interests, experiences, age levels, and geographic locations."⁶⁵ The actual number of attendees was fifty-three women; the seven founding coordinators and an additional forty-six women, ranging in age from

⁶² The headings I use for the sections on WSPA sessions by year are taken directly from WSPA publicity materials. Thus, they vary somewhat in format and do not present entirely consistent information.

⁶³ 1975 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

eighteen to forty-nine, most between twenty-one and twenty-four years old.⁶⁶ Six children, ages three to seven years old, also attended with their mothers.⁶⁷

The seven coordinators presented a total of five core courses: The Community Context of Town Development (Ellen Perry Berkeley), Demystification of Tools in Relation to Design (Katrin Adam), Professionalism Redefined (Marie Kennedy and Joan Forrester Sprague, with Jill Hamburg), Urban Design: The Outside of Inside (Bobbie Sue Hood), and Women and the Built Environment: Personal, Social, and Professional Perceptions (Phyllis Birkby and Leslie Kanes Weisman).⁶⁸ The content of the core courses ranged from offerings that were similar to conventional educational experiences but presented in a more supportive context, to feminist critiques of the design professions and educational systems, to developing new forms of knowledge based on women's ways of experiencing the world.

A key element of the WSPA experience was creating a structure for the session that would build communication, support, and a strong sense of community among *all* the participants through organization of time, space, people, and activities in a radically different manner than professional education of the time. The founding group of coordinators wanted "a different presentation for everyone, a different kind of gathering, with different interactions for larger groups. This was not going to be a regular kind of place."⁶⁹ They rejected the hierarchal power structure that set faculty above students for an egalitarian environment in which everyone had knowledge to share. They were committed to creating a "new style of teaching, a new style of conferencing"⁷⁰ that integrated their feminist values with what they felt could be salvaged from conventional design and planning education. Ellen described WSPA as a "cross between a graduate seminar and support group and summer camp."⁷¹ Group events were structured so that the participants in each core course were not isolated from each other, but had ample opportunity to find out what other groups were doing and process ideas and information in the larger context of the entire school. Organizers

⁶⁶ Ibid. WSPA's overview of this session's participants in "The Women's School of Planning and Architecture Background Facts, Information Section" (1976) lists the age range of participants as eighteen to fifty, so the oldest participant must have had a birthday between when the registration card was created and the end of their time at WSPA.

⁶⁷ Registration cards do not always contain full information on children who attended WSPA sessions. This data on the 1975 session is from The Women's School of Planning and Architecture Background Facts, Information Section, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁶⁸ 1975 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁶⁹ Ellen Perry Berkeley, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, Shaftsbury, Vermont, November 21, 2007.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

expended a great deal of effort to create multiple levels of communication between the participants: “Each of the core courses met a certain number of times only with that bunch, just a small bunch. But once with half the school and once with the entire school.”⁷² Thus each teaching coordinator was responsible not just to the ten to twelve participants focusing on her own topic, but to everyone who attended, and all of the participants had a chance to engage with all of the teaching coordinators and all of the subject matter being addressed across the school. In addition to the activities that focused on planning, design, and related topics, spontaneous workshops were organized on hysterectomies, dowsing/parapsychology/astrology, lesbianism, and children/feminism/work.⁷³

An important component of this school-wide communication strategy was the wall-size schedule board on which all school activities were listed and organized. Core course meetings and other scheduled events were posted for each day, while a multitude of notes, announcements, and listings of spontaneous events were taped onto the board in the appropriate places, successfully creating an accessible and dynamic representation of the entire school and everyone’s activities. This board was a larger version of an organization matrix that had been utilized early in the planning process.

The fees for the first WSPA program ranged from \$380 for a double room with board and tuition to \$420 for a single room with board and tuition (see Table 4 for a summary of fees for all WSPA programs, 1975-1981, and Table 5 for a conversion of these amounts to 2013 equivalents: all fees covered attendance at the full session unless otherwise noted). A deposit of \$30 was requested at the time of registration. Room, board, and daycare for each child under 13 was \$135, and children were expected to share a room with their mothers.⁷⁴ The coordinators originally intended that all seven teaching coordinators would receive an honorarium of \$250, but only \$541.49 remained after all bills were paid. In the end, they decided to save these funds as seed money for the next session.⁷⁵

Almost immediately after the 1975 WSPA program finished, planning commenced for the following year. The coordinators reviewed the 1975 session, considered where they stood as far as the planned documentation project, and addressed organizational issues, including the challenging task of

⁷² This schedule and the schedule board itself were modeled on a series of diagrams created by Ellen, which graphically demonstrated the rather complex choreography of time and space necessary to make this work. Ellen Perry Berkeley, interview by Elizabeth Cahn, Shaftsbury, Vermont, November 21, 2007.

⁷³ Weisman and Birkby, WSPA Background Facts, Information Section, 1976, 16, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁷⁴ 1975 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁷⁵ Katrin Adam letter to distribution list, April 2, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

continuing to evolve and integrate new women participants into the planning process. This involved a three-step process: first, moving from “coordinators” to “coordinating”; developing policies; and then implementing the policies through what was idealistically intended to be a broad, inclusive, iterative process.

Our consensus is that we no longer have a finite number of COORDINATORS but rather a PROCESS of COORDINATING which is performed by a changing group of all those women interested and able at any time. The process which is evolving is such that a group of WSPA people, for example those of us meeting in New York, take upon themselves the responsibility of scheduling and programming the next event as they perceive it. They then publicize the next event to all WSPA participants so that all who want to join the next phase of the coordinating process can. We feel that in such a geographically diffuse group smaller groups must take initiatives and we all need to trust each other’s intentions to some extent. At the same time, the utmost effort must be made to keep the process open for feedback, input, and participating by everyone who wants to at every step of the way.⁷⁶

Around the same time Joan noted in one of her papers in her organizational development studies that idealist notions of ideal process were not entirely congruent with messy interpersonal realities: “The founders of WSPA rejected conventional bureaucracy as a legitimate organizing principle. We must now face the task of defining the alternative structure clearly, or fall prey to uncontrolled, unproductive emotionalism and divisive impulse. We said in the brochure of the school ‘We have much to gain from each other.’ We also have much to lose.”⁷⁷

Networking with others to publicize WSPA and support-related projects on women and design continued throughout that year, and several participants attended the “Conference for Women in Design and Planning,” held November 7-9, 1975, at the Boston Architectural Center, Boston MA (Boston Architectural Center 1975).

**WSPA ’76 Women’s School of Planning and Architecture
Second Session
2 weeks: August 8-22, 1976
Stevenson College, Santa Cruz, California**

The main goal of the 1976 session was to provide a WSPA experience on the West Coast, in keeping with the founders’ intention that WSPA be a mobile community that could reach women in diverse geographic areas. Planning for 1976 started in the fall of 1975; this time the planning process was even

⁷⁶ WSPA Newsletter, October 31, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁷⁷ Joan Forrester Sprague essay, 1975, in The Women’s School of Planning and Architecture Background Facts, WSPA Records, SSC.

more complicated and fraught with potential for miscommunications, since half of the organizers were on the East Coast and the other half were on the West Coast. Most interaction between these geographically dispersed groups was in the form of written memos and meeting notes, with occasional phone calls. For a while, there was still discussion of scheduling two two-week sessions but in the end this was not feasible and once again a single two-week session was held.

The East Coast group conducted a series of lengthy meetings about WSPA with formal agendas and minutes, in October and December 1975, and in February, March, April, May, and June 1976.⁷⁸ The organizers on the West Coast held a separate series of meetings. Communication between these two groups was imperfect, and tensions ran rather high, especially as the deadlines for important decisions arrived. An additional strain in this year's planning process was that the groups on the two coasts seemed to have very different norms about how much information needed to be captured in meeting minutes and sent to the other group. The East Coast contingent was continually frustrated at what they perceived as lack of sufficient information from the West Coast planning group, a tension that prompted several phone calls during the planning process. On June 5-6, 1976, the East Coast group held a weekend planning session at Ellen's house in Vermont to try to finalize plans for that summer's program, which they apparently felt were insufficient, or at least insufficiently communicated to them by the West Coast group. One outgrowth of this meeting was a commitment to allocate time for rebuilding group harmony when everyone was finally together in Santa Cruz for the actual session.⁷⁹

Enrollment for WSPA 1976 was limited to seventy-five women and, as in 1975, diversity among participants was to be achieved through deliberation about participants after the first fifty applicants were accepted: "No specific academic credentials are required; the only requirement is that participants be seriously interested in planning, architecture, or environmental design. The first fifty places will be assigned on a first-come, first serve basis. The other places will be filled to attain a wide variety of interests, experiences, age levels, and geographic locations."⁸⁰ In the end, however, WSPA 1976 had only forty-nine participants—eight teaching coordinators and forty-one participants. Registration cards indicate that three of the eight teaching coordinators were from the original group (Ellen, Phyllis, and Leslie), while

⁷⁸ Minutes, 1975-1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁷⁹ Meeting notes, June 9, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁸⁰ 1976 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

six were new (Patti Glazer, Charlotte Hitchcock, Hattie Russell, Polly Cooper, Cathy Simon, and Harriet Cohen; only Charlotte had attended the previous year). Of the other session participants in 1976, five had attended in 1975. This year the age range was slightly older—between twenty-one and fifty-seven—and most of them were between twenty-three and twenty-eight years of age.⁸¹

The publicity brochure, which was produced several months before final arrangements were completed, listed nineteen women as coordinators and ten as teaching coordinators. The list of coordinators included all of the founders and, in addition, Nancy Baker, Harriet Cohen, Polly Cooper, Gail Frese, Amy Freundlich, Patti Glazer, Marian Cyril Haviland, Charlotte Hitchcock, Nan Ellen Jackson, Mary Ann McCarthy, Marilyn Mason Sommer, and Charlotte Strem. The list of teaching coordinators comprised Ellen, Phyllis, and Leslie, as well as Selina Bendix, Sara Holmes Boutelle, Harriet Cohen, Polly Cooper, Patti Glazer, Charlotte Hitchcock, and Cathy Simon. Registration cards for that year indicate that Selina Bendix and Sara Holmes Boutelle ended up being “resource women,” meaning they offered a short course but were not involved in the entire session. Katrin did not attend this session; it is unclear from the registration cards whether Marie and Joan actually attended; and Bobbie Sue attended, but apparently was not involved in teaching.⁸²

The final group of eight teaching coordinators presented seven core courses: Architectural Design (Cathy Simon), Basic Woodworking Techniques (Charlotte Hitchcock), Design and Construction of Architectural Tapestry (Patti Glazer), Energy Conscious Design (Polly Cooper), The Politics and Ideology of the Urban Planning Process (Harriet Cohen), Women and the Built Environment (Noel Phyllis Birkby and Leslie Kanes Weisman), and The Writing Process: A Designer’s Approach (Ellen Perry Berkeley). Other planned activities that were only possible on the West Coast included a field trip to visit Julia Morgan buildings led by Sara Holmes Boutelle, who was in the process of conducting the research that resulted in her monograph on Morgan (1988).⁸³

Fees for the second year were slightly higher than the first year, as was the deposit. A double room with board and tuition was \$415; a single was \$455. The fee for each child under 13 years old sharing a room with their mother, including room, board, and daycare, was \$160, and the requested deposit was

⁸¹ 1976 registration cards, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ 1976 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

\$40.⁸⁴ The brochure added the information that no partial attendance or camping would be allowed as this was felt to be disruptive to the development of group cohesion, although the registration cards indicate that two people were day attendees and one was allowed to camp.⁸⁵ In addition to “regular fare,” vegetarian food was available.⁸⁶

After the first two sessions the continuing coordinators sent out a questionnaire asking for input from other women about their vision for the future of WSPA’s evolving program. They asked for feedback on content areas, duration/season of the programs, geography/setting, money and cost to participants, and children/childcare issues.

In 1977 no WSPA session was held; a 1979 letter from one of the 1976 coordinators to a later participant reported that the hiatus in 1977 occurred because “everyone was burned out. A lot of bad feelings were created by the miscommunication of trying to plan the 1976 WSPA from both the East and West Coast.”⁸⁷ However, a number of other relevant events took place that year, including a symposium in New York at the Brooklyn Museum on “Women in Architecture: Realizations and Possibilities (March 1977), and Leslie and Phyllis were involved in founding Networks: Women in Architecture, a New York-based professional organization.

The Women’s School of Planning & Architecture
Third Session: Work places and dwellings: Implications for women
2 weeks: August 13-26, 1978 and/or Weekend only: August 19-20, 1978
Roger Williams College, Bristol, Rhode Island

The third session of WSPA in 1978 incorporated a number of format changes, based on feedback from the questionnaire sent out after the 1976 session. “In 1977, we undertook a reassessment of previous sessions to determine the best direction for the future of WSPA. Many participants and interested future participants responded to our questionnaire asking for opinions on the most useful and desirable format for future programs.”⁸⁸ This feedback loop reiterated and reinforced the commitment to the original plan to include participants in the evolution of the school, while at least indirectly acknowledging that opinions differed and consensus was not automatic. “Response to the questionnaire indicated that the majority

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ 1976 registration cards, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁸⁶ 1976 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁸⁷ Charlotte Hitchcock letter to Linden Burke, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁸⁸ 1978 brochure, WSPA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC.

preferred to attend a summer session in the Northeast. A great many women were interested in a weekend program, although many others opted for a longer program, similar to our previous sessions.”⁸⁹ This feedback led to a new structure for the session: two full weeks, punctuated by an independent set of activities on the weekend in the middle, which participants could attend separately from the full session.

The 1978 session focused on “the special meanings to women—in both our personal and professional lives—of dwellings and workplaces . . . [beginning] with reflections on history, examination of cultural and class differences, and our assessment of the present.”⁹⁰ Group activities included exploring the locale of the school session, slide presentations on dwellings and workplaces, and seminars on “the ecology of sex roles.” Weekend activities focused on “women’s professional organizations, strategies for strengthening network connections, evaluation discussions on the AIA’s affirmative action plan for the integration of women in the architectural profession, and discussions of women in non-education based careers (for example, as volunteers in the preservation field).”⁹¹

In addition to the schedule adaptations, the organizers also made a shift away from the structure used during the first two years, in which participants had been asked to commit to a single core course, and moved instead to a more flexible series of shorter workshops. The previous course topics were assessed and a number of new focus areas were identified: “The major interests of those who responded to the questionnaire were in energy-conscious design, the feminist analysis of the built environment, the politics of architecture and planning, as well as issues, programs, and techniques for rehabilitation of housing and work environments. The format and program we are offering in 1978 are a direct response to those interests.”⁹² The final workshop topics included Low Technology Energy Conservation; Neighborhoods, Dwellings, and Workplaces; Seminars on China; Working in the Private and Public Sectors; The Workspace: Academia—Feminist Environmental Curricula; and WSPA’s Future Growth and Development.⁹³ In addition to these predetermined workshop topics, the coordinators were also committed to “scheduling many special sessions as our interests and affinities emerged.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ In both publicity and scheduling records for this year, some topics were linked to specific individual coordinators or presenters, while others were not.

⁹⁴ 1978 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

The first day of the second week was devoted to small group workshops on the potential of Community Block Grants to address the needs of women regarding housing, neighborhoods, and community planning and development. The workshops were led by representatives of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Women's Policy and Program Division. The participation of women from HUD turned out to be instrumental in providing seed money for the creation of the Women's Development Corporation in 1979 (personal communication, Katrin Adam; McGroarty 2005). The final few days of the 1978 session focused on planning for the future—WSPA's future, women in planning and architecture, and the broader future for women and women's needs in the design of the environment.⁹⁵

But these were relatively minor shifts rather than major changes. The original concern for diversity among participants, and use of WSPA to create informal educational experiences and supportive networks, continued to be emphasized.

The variety of ages, experiences, lifestyles and professional pursuits of WSPA participants is a major educational resource. The development of working relationships with other women who are practicing, studying and teaching has been a lasting asset to WSPA participants and coordinators—a communications network and ongoing forum of women working to effect the environment. For the most part, this has been an informally structured network, depending on individual initiative—for example, some past participants have joined with coordinators to plan future WSPA projects and the newsletter project extended WSPA through the year subsequent to WSPA-76. The expansion of potential for this network will be a major focus at WSPA-78.⁹⁶

The planned number of attendees for the 1978 session was sixty, but more than seventy-five women participated: forty-six were present for the entire two weeks, including seven teaching coordinators and a childcare coordinator. Another thirty-one attended the weekend session only, which seemed to have fulfilled its goal to allow more women to participate. As usual, the early publicity brochure listed a larger group of coordinators, included all seven founders and five others: Susan Aitcheson, Elizabeth Chase, Harriet Cohen, Charlotte Hitchcock, and Marjorie Hoog.⁹⁷ Information on the registration cards indicates that Bobbie Sue and Charlotte Hitchcock did not attend, and that Leslie, Elizabeth Chase, and Harriet Cohen attended but were not coordinators, or at least not teaching coordinators. It appears that Susan Aitcheson and Marjorie Hoog had not participated in any previous sessions, nor had Pat Munz, who was not listed in the brochure, but her registration card indicated she was the childcare coordinator. Although age was still foregrounded in publicity as one aspect of the diversity the organizers sought, participants'

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ 1978 registration cards, WSPA Records, SSC.

ages were not listed on the 1978 registration cards as they had been in previous years. Again, the majority of participants were new to WSPA, and most of the women attending a second time had attended their first session in 1975, not 1976.

Fees for both adults and children were slightly lower than the previous year, ranging from \$350 as the early registration fee for a double room with board and tuition to \$435 for a single room with board and tuition, if received after June 10. Each child under 13 years of age, in a double occupancy room, was \$135, including board and daycare. Registration fee for the weekend program was \$80 for a double room, \$100 for a single, and \$25 for each child. The requested deposit was \$50 per adult and \$25 per child, although registration cards indicate that there was some flexibility in the deposit amount accepted. Weekend participants who wanted to participate in the HUD workshops on Monday could pay for an additional night's accommodation, but the registration forms indicate that only two people stayed over to take advantage of this opportunity.⁹⁸

In 1978 and 1979 three women who had been involved with WSPA—Katrin, Joan, and Susan Aitcheson—founded the Women's Development Corporation in Providence, Rhode Island.

Women's School of Planning & Architecture 1979
Fourth Session
2 weeks: August 9-23, 1979 or Weekend only, August 9-12, 1979
Regis College, Denver, Colorado

For the 1979 session, WSPA continued to describe itself as “an alternative learning experience for women” but expanded the list of design-related areas to include “all environmental design fields—architecture, planning, landscape architecture, urban design, environmental psychology, etc.”⁹⁹ According to the publicity brochure, the 1979 topics were chosen “based on the expectation that the next few decades will witness a critical juncture in history—the transition from a rapidly growing and resource consumptive industrial society to a post-industrial society.”¹⁰⁰ By this year, the organizers were using the term history rather than herstory.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ 1978 registration cards, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁹⁹ 1979 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Both two-week and weekend registration options were offered, but this time the weekend was the first weekend of the two-week period rather than the one in the middle, to avoid the development of group dynamics that seemed to make it difficult for women attending only the weekend sessions to connect with the two-week participants. Workshop topics offered during the opening weekend included “The Next Twenty Years—Predictable Problems and Trends,” “Women in a Conserver Society,” “Designing for Diversity,” and “Personal Futures.”¹⁰² The full session included five core courses and five “mini-sessions.” The core courses focused on the changing environmental needs of women, planning for women, feminist analysis of housing, a workshop in building redesign, and “Making the Most of What We Have.” The mini-sessions addressed communication methods; feminist leadership styles; conflict management; women and suburbia; and included a presentation on the Women’s Development Corporation, just in the process of being created by WSPA founders Joan and Katrin, along with WSPA coordinator and later participant, Sue Aitcheson.¹⁰³

The organization of the 1979 session into a two-week session with a weekend option during the first weekend was again successful in attracting more participants than the first two years, though fewer than the third year. It appears that a total of sixty women attended—forty-four for the longer session, including all the coordinators, and sixteen for the weekend program. The 1979 session brochure listed thirteen coordinators in total. Phyllis and Susan Aitcheson had been coordinators of previous sessions. All of the remaining 1979 coordinators, except for Cynthia Fahy, had attended in 1978: Charlotte Strem, Mary Vogel, Jilliene Bolker, Sophie Hauserman, Marsha McLaughlin, Rebecca Peterson, Rita Robbins, Annette Salem, Wendy Sarkissian, and Valerie Underwood. Registration cards indicate that Joan attended, but not as a coordinator.¹⁰⁴ There does not seem to have been a distinction between session coordinators and teaching coordinators this year, and most of the coordinators were involved in presenting on several of the topics included in the overall program.

The fees for 1979 were slightly higher than those for the 1978 session. Early registration for a double room for the two-week program was \$400, while late registration for a single room was \$500. Early registration for the weekend only was \$100 for a double room and \$120 for a single room, with an

¹⁰² Ibid. As in 1978, most of the 1979 topics—both full session and weekend—are not strongly linked with particular coordinators in either publicity materials or session records.

¹⁰³ 1979 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁰⁴ 1979 registration cards, WSPA Records, SSC.

additional \$25 added if received after June 11. The brochure did not include the registration cost for children, only a request that “If you plan to bring your child (children) please let us know and we will work out accommodations.”¹⁰⁵ The requested deposit for adults was \$75, and for each child, \$25.

At the close of the 1979 session a group of former coordinators (Marsha McLaughlin, Jil Bolker, Charlotte Strem, Wendy Sarkissian, Phyllis, and Mary Vogel) wrote a seven-page document summarizing WSPA policies and guidelines, intended to “provide guidance to coordinators of future WSPA sessions and to ensure continuity and adherence to WSPA’s original purposes” and “help prevent most of the confusion and communication problems we’ve experienced in the past.”¹⁰⁶ The general topics covered in this document included Budget, Schedule, Publicity, Finding a Site, Program, Work Study, and Child Care. According to this document, a WSPA policy group was to be formed, made up of all interested coordinators, to “review policy proposals as they arise” in the future.¹⁰⁷

The guidelines included the original list of eleven goals and served as a written document of the founders’ philosophical approach to creating WSPA. In addition, the guidelines were clearly an attempt to capture nascent “institutional knowledge” and help future coordinators avoid some of the challenging problems that inevitably resulted from a differing group of organizers running an ambitious summer program in a different part of the United States each year with almost all new participants at every session. Some of the suggestions were simple but essential to a group educational effort of almost any sort: “Reserving a site must generally be done well in advance,” and “There always seems to be too much to do and not enough time. Result: burn out.” Other suggestions were specific to design: “need hot showers, electricity, phone, tables for drawing, large meeting room, etc.,” while others were responsive to the more specific philosophical aspects of WSPA: “Outside resource people are sometimes justified because of what they can offer, but remember their costs in your budgeting and avoid the ‘star’ trip.” The guidelines also stated a preference that WSPA rent from a feminist or alternative group if at all possible, and in a state that had passed the Equal Rights Amendment. Finally, they made a series of recommendations for the 1980 session, including proposing the idea of scheduling the session from mid-week to mid-week “to allow for cheaper plane rates and the chance to check in at work both weeks”; a list of preferred themes including

¹⁰⁵ 1979 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁰⁶ Memo, August 30, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

feminist societies, preparing for the '80s, rural development, community, and hands-on opportunities; and a recommendation to “balance diverse personal and group needs” through careful attention to scheduling each day’s activities.¹⁰⁸ Finally, they strongly suggested that future coordinators “try to get the nearest one or two past coordinators to take on an advising role. Their ideas and historical perspective will be invaluable.”¹⁰⁹

**The Women’s School of Planning & Architecture
Fifth Session July 23-30, 1980
With special Saturday and Sunday, July 26 and 27
Hood College, Frederick, Maryland [cancelled]**

The 1980 session made it all the way through the planning process before ultimately being cancelled for lack of timely enrollment. The 1980 session coordinators were three women who had attended the 1979 session: Linden Burke (later Burk), Beverly Eisenberg, and Kathryn (Kati) McDonald. The intended core courses included Communities: Housing and Women, Transportation, Impact on Women, Influencing Academia: Toward a Feminist Perspective, Alternative Technologies, and Access to Money: Economic Development.¹¹⁰ Once again, individual coordinators were not strongly linked with specific courses, but by late April seven people had been identified as topic coordinators: Sue Aitcheson, Katrin, Joan, Mary Deal, Judy Meany, and Helen Helfer. Additionally, there was talk of holding a “WSPA meeting” after the session.¹¹¹ Although the organizers had followed the suggestions of the 1979 document as far as planning a one-week session that ran from midweek to midweek instead of from weekend to weekend, this did not seem to generate much interest. Lack of timely publicity probably contributed to the small number of registrants.

On the positive side, cutting the length of the WSPA program from two weeks to one reduced planned fees to participants in the full session by about half. Registration for a double room before the deadline of June 1 was \$225, while a single room after the deadline was \$325. Room, board, and daycare for each child aged 3-12, sharing a room with their mother, was \$100. The weekend program was \$80 for a

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ 1980 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹¹ Linden Burke to distribution list, April 23, 1980. WSPA Records, SSC.

double room and \$100 for a single room, about the same as the previous year's cost. The requested deposit was \$100 for each adult and \$50 for each child by June 1, with the remainder of the fees by July 1.¹¹²

The 1980 session needed forty-six paying participants by June 23 to cover program costs, but by June 6 only seventeen had registered and ultimately the decision to cancel it was made.¹¹³ The program was first postponed to a projected date of February 1981, but at some point that idea was abandoned and the coordinators decided to pursue an entirely different sort of event based on their connections with HUD, where several of the organizers had worked.

1981

WSPA Symposium, May 17-20, American University, Washington, DC Community-Based Alternatives and Women in the Eighties

A National Symposium for and by women focusing on the special needs of women in the areas of housing, employment, economic development, education and cooperative development.

The 1981 WSPA event, a conference in Washington, DC, with a participant list of more than 250 women, grew out of the unfinished agenda of the 1980 session that had been cancelled. Linden Burk (formerly Burke) and Kati McDonald carried over many of the same programming ideas and joined forces with Helen Helfer and Judy Meany to form the coordinating group. They vigorously pursued the possibility of funding the session with a grant from HUD through their contacts in HUD's Women's Policy and Program Division. The first version of their request to HUD for \$20,000 also proposed development of a slide presentation and documentary on women and environmental issues, which would have premiered at the symposium and then been used as an education and publicity resource.¹¹⁴ Eventually the slide presentation and documentary were dropped from the proposal, and the final grant of \$10,000 supported a relatively traditional conference.

A new aspect of the planning was the challenge of working with HUD to gain funding. The potential to access a large chunk of funds from one source, along with the opportunity to reach out to a large number of women and women's community organizations that represented more diverse groups than the previous residential WSPA sessions had allowed, was a powerful combination. Several of the still-

¹¹² 1980 brochure, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹³ Kati McDonald to distribution list, June 9, 1980, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹⁴ Kathleen McDonald Proposal to HUD, July 25, 1980, WSPA Records, SSC.

active group of founders and former coordinators saw a conference of this sort as a valuable new direction for WSPA, but not everyone was convinced. One former coordinator wrote to Kati, “I want to encourage you not to neglect a long-range vision in constructing strategies to meet more urgent present needs,”¹¹⁵ and another cautioned, “what I see missing is a statement about WSPA, where it has been, and where it is going, including some discussion about the definition of values that we, as women, bring to special environmental problems and issues.”¹¹⁶

The focus of past WSPA sessions on developing personal relationships among women through the closed environment of the residential sessions was no longer congruent with some organizers’ desire to reach larger numbers of women and address challenging environmental issues more directly. It seemed that the spatial model of lengthy sessions in a somewhat isolated geographical setting would have to be given up to succeed in outreach to a broader public. Whether this shift would be an essential form of organizational growth or an insurmountable challenge was not at all clear in advance. Handwritten notes from one of the meetings with the HUD representatives show that concerns included loss of WSPA’s “emotional intensity,” and replacing “time spent talking with each other” with a “turn to the community.”¹¹⁷ Leslie argued that “WSPA has been financially not viable . . . but if a session was financially viable, that’s innovative enough to sustain us and maybe we’re ready for this . . . we’re crazy not to take this opportunity.”¹¹⁸ A different position was voiced by Katrin, who wrote “The biggest problem is to generate enough energy to do another session . . . I’m very afraid the next session won’t happen.”¹¹⁹ There was growing tension between the desire to reach more women by working within the system, and the equally important original goal of changing the system.

WSPA’s original eleven goals were condensed and reformulated slightly into the following description included in the symposium program, which included the spirit of the original list although not all of its specific points.

Founded in 1974 the Women’s School of Planning and Architecture (WSPA) is a private, non-profit corporation, formed to provide an alternative learning experience for women in all environmental fields, including architecture, planning, urban design, housing, neighborhood development, and construction.

¹¹⁵ Mary Vogel letter to Kati McDonald, January 14, 1981, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹⁶ Joan Forrester Sprague letter to Kati McDonald, April 16, 1981, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹⁷ HUD meeting notes, undated [probably 1980], WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹⁸ Leslie Kanes Weisman, in HUD meeting notes, undated [probably 1980], WSPA Records, SSC.

¹¹⁹ Katrin Adam, in HUD meeting notes, undated [probably 1980], WSPA, SSC.

WSPA's intent is to create a personally supportive atmosphere for a stimulating exchange of ideas. Our vision is to achieve a collective visibility and power base within which to effect a change in the priorities and practices within our respective personal and work endeavors. Our educational format is cooperative; productive skills, knowledge, and experiences are shared among all participants.

*WSPA's ongoing goals are: (1) To re-evaluate the processes, priorities, and content of traditional education, and develop alternatives to them. (2) To eliminate some of the effects of our competitive male-defined and identified education—and to rediscover, validate and affirm a new process for women. (3) To provide a forum within which to examine and redefine the nature of professionalism and professional practice. (4) To offer women a separatist experience that is supportive and analytical of our perceptions and common concerns as women within male-dominated fields.*¹²⁰

Here the scope of WSPA's interests was expanded again to include "all environmental fields, including architecture, planning, urban design, housing, neighborhood development, and construction."¹²¹ The emphasis of this 1981 program statement was on providing an alternative, collaborative learning experience and a personally supportive atmosphere for women in male-dominated fields. The original WSPA goals 5, 6, 7, and 8, which focused on creating a separatist forum for developing a critique of traditional education and practice, were retained in almost their original form. But the notion of a mobile community was not mentioned here, nor was the idea of developing an organization not based on volunteerism. The original goal 10—creating a framework within which participants would participate in WSPA's evolution—was also not mentioned in this introduction to WSPA for the symposium, but was addressed during a session at the conference on WSPA's history and future.¹²²

The three-day conference in Washington, DC, was a major departure from previous WSPA events in both structure and content. It was organized as a fairly typical conference with major speakers, plenary sessions, panels and paper presentations of various types and lengths, breakout sessions to address specific topics, receptions and meals, and a film festival. Participants came from thirty-one states, the District of Columbia, and four countries outside the United States—Canada, Denmark, The Netherlands, and New Zealand. Aside from any transportation expenses incurred by participants, the cost to attend was very reasonable, especially compared to the residential sessions. Until May 1, registration was \$15 and accommodation in a double room \$45. Meals for all three days were \$35, but the meal plan could also be broken down into three breakfasts (\$10), three lunches (\$15), or three dinners (\$25). Late registration was

¹²⁰ 1981 Symposium Program, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

an additional \$10 for the conference and \$10 for a double room. The publicity material stated that fee waivers and stipend requests would be considered, based on “potential contribution to Conference, amount requested, and degree of need.”¹²³

The main financial support for this session was the \$10,000 grant from HUD. In addition to HUD and WSPA, the symposium was sponsored by nine additional organizations, including The American Indian National Bank,¹²⁴ The Coalition of 100 Black Women of DC, Center for Community Change, Clearinghouse for Community Based Free Standing Educational Institutions, National Association of Community Cooperatives, National Congress of Neighborhood Women, The National Council of Negro Women, National Hispanic Housing Coalition, Rural American Women, and the Southeast Women’s Employment Coalition. Support for scholarships was obtained from the Windom Foundation (\$500),¹²⁵ The Ford Foundation (\$2500), Presbyterian Church (\$300), and Lutheran Church Council (\$350). Sears Roebuck provided funding to print the conference resource book “Women for Women,” and interpreters were provided by Deafpride.¹²⁶

Almost 300 names were included on the list of registrants for this WSPA event, though there is no confirmation of how many of this number actually attended.¹²⁷ This list indicates that four of the WSPA founders were present: Katrin, Phyllis, Joan, and Leslie. Ellen was on the list but did not attend, because she was caring for her second husband during a serious illness, did not want to spend the money to get to Washington, and was not fully supportive of this direction for WSPA.¹²⁸ An additional ten women who had previously attended a WSPA summer program were on the conference registration list; six of these women had been coordinators or presented a short course at a prior session.¹²⁹ The vast majority of women involved in the conference, both as presenters and as participants, were new to the organization. As several of the founders and prior year coordinators had recommended, a workshop was organized to introduce

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ This organization is not listed in all materials, so they may have decided not to be a sponsor, or not have followed through with any funds.

¹²⁵ Possibly the Windham Foundation of Vermont.

¹²⁶ 1981 Symposium Program and memo from Helen Helfer to Cissy Small, June 24, 1981, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹²⁷ As discussed in footnote 6 in this chapter, the list of 1981 conference participants is drawn from a single document that is probably a list of registrants rather than actual attendees, but I did not find any documents relating to the 1981 conference akin to the registration cards used for other sessions that I could use to cross-reference this information.

¹²⁸ Ellen Perry Berkeley letter to Joan Forrester Sprague, May 2, 1981, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹²⁹ For these names, refer to spreadsheet in Appendix D.

attendees to WSPA and involve both new and former participants in planning for future sessions. This discussion resulted in a list of fourteen women who were interested in WSPA's future.¹³⁰

After the conference the required event summary and grant evaluation for HUD were completed, but the feelings of dissonance and mistrust created during the planning process lingered and communication between coordinators thinned out, perhaps because of the "peculiar vibes" that had surrounded the event from the beginning.¹³¹ Instead of the \$500 to \$1000 that had remained after the residential sessions, which had always been reserved as seed money for the next year, the conference budget was overspent. Kati McDonald's final effort as organizer was sending out a postcard asking for help: "WSPA is \$150 in debt from this year's planning. Please send a small donation (\$10.00) if you are able to help us pay it off. Thanks."¹³²

Post-Symposium WSPA Events

After the national symposium, formal WSPA programming wound down rather quickly. Shortly after the conference a memo was sent to forty-three women to establish a new planning group that would keep the organization alive. The memo acknowledged the "recent alienation caused by events leading up to the symposium" and concluded that "while it was agreed that the symposium achieved the important step of linking WSPA with many women's community-based organizations and other important resources, it became apparent that a need exists for another residential WSPA session."¹³³ But no further session was ever held, due to a combination of burnout, lack of funds, and the dampening effects of Reaganomics, which caused hard times "for the women's movement, which until the election of the new Administration, seemed well on the way to becoming an accepted interest group . . ."¹³⁴

During the 1981–1982 year, a WSPA Steering Committee, later termed the Policy Collective, was created. This group numbered seven women: four founders and three who had been session coordinators: Joan, Katrin, Phyllis, Leslie, Harriet Cohen, Helen Helfer, and Jil Bolker. Once again, correspondence was

¹³⁰ List of Symposium session participants, Jil Bolker to distribution list, May 20, 1981, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹³¹ Ellen Perry Berkeley letter to Joan Forrester Sprague, May 2, 1981, WSPA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

¹³² Kati McDonald to distribution list, undated [1981], WSPA Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC.

¹³³ Jil Bolker to distribution list, May 20 1981, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹³⁴ Linda Charlton, "Sisterhood is Braced for the Reaganauts," *New York Times*, May 10, 1981, in WSPA Records, SSC.

directed to Katrin at her office in Brooklyn, although Jil, on the West Coast, fielded inquiries about WSPA and kept a mailing list up to date. By March 1982, thirty women had inquired about a next session.¹³⁵ The idea of a regular newsletter was finally shelved, and those who had donated funds for this purpose were asked to allow their donations to roll over to general use. Anyone with WSPA papers or records was encouraged to send them to a central record-keeping location at Phyllis's apartment, where they stayed for the long term.¹³⁶

The purpose of the Steering Committee and Policy Collective was to function as a central resource for holding WSPA's institutional memory, developing policies for future WSPA activities including use of the name and organizational status, vetting any proposals that others initiated, and in theory, at least, supporting any future activities.¹³⁷ The main set of policies continued to be the guidelines written after the 1979 summer session, which covered a wide variety of issues from determining location to deciding on session themes to choosing local resource people who would be supportive of WSPA's philosophies.¹³⁸

After the Policy Collective was established, two additional sessions were proposed, but neither one got past a very initial planning stage. Phyllis Birkby had already circulated a plan for an international residential session in Germany, originally proposed for 1982, but nothing ever came of it.¹³⁹ A very different direction for WSPA was proposed in early 1983 by four women in New Mexico who envisioned a series of nine-day WSPA sessions for twenty to thirty women at a time on their ninety acres of "women's land," focusing on energy efficient design, hands-on building, and women's community."¹⁴⁰ They would provide the site and project, while the WSPA Policy Collective would provide organization, coordination, and up-front funds. Members of the Policy Collective who reviewed the proposal responded in a letter, "WSPA has no money. The five of us do not individually or collectively have the time or energy to serve as WSPA coordinators," and "we think your expectations are unrealistic" as far as both the large scope of the project and the small size of the group of participants. The formal reply letter included an apologetic handwritten note from Anne Laird-Blanton: "P.S. In re-reading this letter, I'm afraid it sounds cold & very negative—we don't mean to be that way. All of us want another WSPA session to happen very much . . .

¹³⁵ Jil Bolker to distribution list, January 11, 1982, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Memo, August 30, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹³⁹ Proposal for International WSPA Session, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁴⁰ New Mexico Collective proposal to WSPA Policy Collective, WSPA Records, SSC.

Please think further about what you might want to do in light of our comments & let us hear from you again.”¹⁴¹

The last project carried out in WSPA’s name (in this case as the applicant organization) was Katrin, Barbara Marks, and Anne Laird-Blanton’s successful proposal for a 1983-1984 Design Arts Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). They received \$15,000 for a project called “Architectural Quality in Urban Homesteading,” with the goal to help urban homesteaders, many of them women, “achieve architectural quality in buildings rehabilitated and cooperatively owned and managed by homesteaders through a participatory design process.”¹⁴²

A final memo from Ellen to the distribution list in 1981 identified some of the challenges that faced the women involved in reimagining WSPA after the 1981 conference. Some of the founders had stepped back for personal reasons or moved on to other interests, and the compelling need for connection with other women that originally brought them together had transitioned into other concerns and projects. Ellen acknowledged her willingness to let go of some of the original ideas about what WSPA should be and let it evolve into something new:

I’m also sufficiently distanced from WSPA to feel much freer about letting others do WSPA sessions in whatever way seems a good idea to them. I would be curious as to what develops, but I would not need to have anything like the veto-power (or any other form of Founding-Mother-type control) that we once considered.

I would only suggest that every possible decision made in the past be opened up for new thinking. (I would only keep one decision: that WSPA be for women only.) But all our early thinking about who would come to a session, and how long they would stay, and what they would do, and what they would pay—all of this should be re-examined. I realize that this is altogether terrifying, but also liberating. If there is to be another session, shouldn’t the people working on it have utmost freedom in what they’re doing—not feeling they have a lot of mothers looking over their shoulders?

Concerning the use of WSPA as a conduit for grant applications, I have no real objection. This seems a good idea, in fact, for the continuation of WSPA during times when a session may not be a real option.

Ellen recognized the possibility that WSPA could evolve in a way that would meet the goals of newer organizers and the current, transformed interests of women who wanted to participate, yet also voiced a sadness about what had occurred during WSPA’s existence since 1974:

¹⁴¹ Ann Laird-Blanton to New Mexico Collective, January 15, 1983, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁴² NEA Proposal and Grant, WSPA Records, SSC.

Finally, it has often occurred to me that the WSPA experience—extraordinary though it was for all of us who have been coordinators—the experience cannot be repeated endlessly, at least by these particular people. The old coordinators can't keep doing it. It doesn't work that way. It worked for us, early on, because we had a lot of excitement about it, and a lot of trust in our working arrangements. Somehow much of this has been damaged or lost and seems unmendable. The creative excitement isn't there, and the trust is long gone, for many of us. What's left is a lot of judgmentalism, a lot of self-righteousness, a lot of suspicion, and a lot of guilt over not having the energy. . . .Whoever has good feelings and good excitement about WSPA should BE WSPA.¹⁴³

The comprehensive documentation of WSPA ideas and events, originally envisioned as a book and film, never came to fruition.

A number of WSPA founders wrote and published on WSPA and related topics during WSPA's existence and shortly afterwards. Leslie and Phyllis published an article on WSPA in a collection of essays on feminist education in 1983 (Bunch and Pollack, 1983). In addition to the articles mentioned earlier, Ellen included an essay by Leslie, "A Feminist Experiment: Learning from WSPA Then and Now," in her co-edited volume *Architecture: A Place for Women* (Berkeley and McQuaid 1989).

Phyllis Birkby died of breast cancer in 1994, and the executors of her estate made arrangements for her voluminous papers to go to the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, which was interested in expanding its collection of materials on the United States women's movement of the 1970s. While processing the Birkby papers, Maida Goodwin came across the section on WSPA and a separate entry was created for the WSPA Records. Other participants were contacted and asked for additional contributions to the collection, and many came in, amplifying the collection: items were added in 1997 by Ellen Perry Berkeley; in 2000 by Marie Kennedy; in 2000 by Susan Aitchison, Rita Robbins, Charlotte Strem Caughey, and Sharon Sutton; and in 2003 by Marilyn Mason Sommer.

In 2002, Leslie applied for and received a Graham Foundation Fellowship to conduct research on the impact WSPA and feminism in general may have had on the personal and professional lives of the women who were involved in WSPA (Weisman 2002). She wrote to everyone who had attended a session that she had contact information for, and requested that they share memories of their participation in WSPA and updates on their career and life accomplishments. She also asked them to complete written surveys for later analysis. Another outcome of the grant was a reunion conference Leslie organized with help from Ellen, held at the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College in 2002 to celebrate and add materials to the WSPA collection, and to provide an opportunity for WSPA participants to reconnect with each other.

¹⁴³ Ellen Perry Berkeley memo to distribution list, Dec 29, 1982, WSPA Records, SSC.

Nineteen women attended the WSPA Reunion, including four of the five surviving cofounders (Leslie, Ellen, Karin, and Bobbie Sue). Forty-three other participants sent personal narratives and photographs related to their lives and careers, which Leslie compiled into an Alumnae Directory and Reunion Album with graphics by Charlotte Hitchcock.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ WSPA Alumnae Directory and Reunion Album, 1975-2002, edited by Leslie Kanes Weisman (2004), SSC.

Table 4: WSPA Program Fees (in year of program, US dollars)

	1975	1976	1978	1979	1980	1981
single registration	\$420	455	400	450	250	<i>Registration</i> 15 registration 25 late registration
single late registration	--	--	435	500	325	
double registration	380	415	350	400	225	
double late registration	--	--	385	450	375	<i>Room</i> 45 room fee 55 late room fee
child registration	135	160	135		100	
adult deposit	30	40	50	75	100	
child deposit			25	25	50	<i>Meals</i> 35 for nine meals 10 for three breakfasts 15 for three lunches 25 for three dinners
weekend single registration			100 HUD wksp 50	120	80	
weekend single late registration				145		
weekend double registration			80 HUD wksp 40	100	100	
weekend double late registration				125		

Note: All registration fees were for the full program.

Table 5: WSPA Program Fees (converted to 2013 US dollars)

	1975	1976	1978	1979	1980	1981
single registration	\$1820	1860	1430	1445	705	<i>Registration</i> 40 registration 65 late registration
single late registration	--	--	1555	1605	920	
double registration	1645	1700	1250	1285	635	
double late registration	--	--	1375	1445	1060	<i>Room</i> 115 room fee 140 late room fee
child registration	585	655	480		280	
adult deposit	130	165	180	240	280	
child deposit			90	80	140	<i>Meals</i> 90 for nine meals 25 for three breakfasts 40 for three lunches 65 for three dinners
weekend single registration			360 HUD 1780	385	225	
weekend single late registration				465		
weekend double registration			285 HUD 130	320	280	
weekend double late registration				400		

Note: Amounts are US dollar equivalents ROUNDED TO NEAREST \$5.00, calculated using http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm on July 6, 2013.

CHAPTER 5

WSPA: GOALS AND CHALLENGES

Introduction

This chapter builds on the chronology and “facts” of WSPA’s history laid out in the previous chapter to identify themes and challenges in WSPA’s organization and evolution. The seven women who founded WSPA came together as a group in the context of a decade of civil rights activism, a strong grassroots-based women’s movement, concerted effort to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, and widespread struggle to improve conditions for women. Jean Baker Miller, author of *A New Psychology of Women* (1976), wrote of the “new spirit abroad among women today, a new kind of collective and cooperative devotion to each other and to the search for knowledge about important matters” (ix). Feminism was both “in the air” and “on the ground,” providing a rich and heady source of ideas and practices that critiqued existing structures and increased women’s awareness of potential new roles in society (Freidan 1963, Evans 2003, Rosen 2006).

The Founders as a Cohort

The women’s movement of the 1970s in the United States was driven in part by a sense that women—at least white, middle-class women—had been isolated in the home, kept out of the workplace, or, if at work, grouped with other women in lesser-status types of work at lower pay (Friedan 1963, Evans 2003, Rosen 2006). The women involved in WSPA had already overcome some of these barriers to women’s participation in society through their professional educations and design-related employment, but other problems remained. As a group they were more likely to suffer from isolation *from* other women within male-dominated fields and workplaces, rather than isolation *with* other women excluded from the world of professional work (Rosen 2006). The creation of WSPA was driven in part by their desire to connect with others in similar circumstances. Marie described her isolation from other women at work:

I worked for [municipal agency] most of the time that I was going through school. I also worked for another architect. Oh, when out of school, that’s right, I had a fourth job. I did a little bit of construction supervision on a rehab project, and in all of these settings I was pretty much the only woman. And . . . I was the only woman that was teaching at [architecture school], and in my class

... I was one of two women. And there wasn't really a critical mass to sort of develop any sense of solidarity with other women.¹

This group of architects and planners, and a larger group of women around them also working on changing the environmental design fields, were inspired by feminist efforts throughout society and drew from many sources to craft their interventions in design and planning education and practice. They believed in the collective power of women working together, and were highly motivated to reach out to other women to bring their feminist concerns to their chosen work. In addition to their backgrounds in mainstream design and planning, they knew about the nascent interdisciplinary field of environmental psychology, they had participated in CR groups, they had been involved in political action projects, and they had started other organizations addressing similar issues.

The founders of WSPA developed their primary understandings of gender, class, and race discrimination prior to their entry into planning or a design-related field. In the interviews I conducted, a number mentioned growing up in families in which bigotry and discrimination were clearly recognized, and whose parents had been involved in feminist organizing or other forms of political activism. For others, awareness of discrimination had come to them through personal experiences and observations, and by overcoming limitations placed on them as women in their families, educations, or work settings. Concern for issues of fairness, equity, and social justice as well as practical skills in organizing and political work were not new to them, and most had already engaged in social change work among a politicized group of activist friends and colleagues before they met in the world of environmental design. The creation of WSPA was certainly not the first feminist activity or work for social change in which these women had participated, but it became an organizing site for social transformation that linked their activism with their professional educations, interests, and goals.

From the current moment in time it may be difficult to understand the isolation experienced by an earlier generation of professional women in design and planning (Grossman and Reitzes 1989, Hall 1989, Cole 2001). The women who started WSPA acquired their post-secondary educations during the 1960s, a point at which the percentage of women in the male-dominated spatial design fields of design—planning, architecture, and landscape architecture—was extremely low (Berkeley 1972, Milwid 1982, Martin 1986). The women I interviewed described not only struggles that they encountered during their educations, but

¹ Kennedy interview, 2008.

also significant hurdles they had to overcome to gain access to that education. In most cases, once they got in the door at school, or later, at work, they were virtually alone as women. The women's movement, for them, provided not just an opportunity to connect and work with other women, but a justification for seeking out the company of other women in the first place.

In interviews, the surviving women who founded WSPA also shared personal experiences of sexism in the design fields. This cohort of women had a variety of backgrounds and exposures to feminism earlier in their lives, but all had passed through male-dominated educational programs on their way to participating in male-dominated professional fields. They had experienced gender discrimination personally, watched it happen to others, and observed the almost inevitable lower status and "glass ceiling" experienced by the few women who made it into professional settings at the time (Berkeley 1972, Scott Brown 1989, Cole 2007). Even women mentally prepared to handle such strains could eventually tire of the isolation and experience of being a "token," as the only female, or one of only a few, in their educational and work settings. They were aware of their negative experiences as women in their fields, and wanted to connect with others who understood them. Starting WSPA was one way of creating a critical mass of women who could bring explicitly feminist goals and strategies to the task of changing design and planning.

Several of the women I interviewed noted that their mothers were important role models, either as strong positive figures, or as smart women held back in their own lives in ways that the daughters did not wish to emulate. Katrin grew up in Germany and "right after the war my mother became a chief editor for a newly initiated radio program specifically addressing women's concerns,"² so many of the issues American women were struggling to address in the early 1970s were already familiar to her. Bobbie Sue described her mother as "in her own way, a very ardent feminist but she would never have used that word," and due to her father's early death she grew up "in a family which did not have a male head and with a mother who was very different from other people's mothers."³ The role models weren't always mothers—Leslie's father, an attorney in Detroit, took a strong stand against both racism and anti-Semitism, leaving a strong

² Adam interview, 2011.

³ Hood interview, 2012.

impression on her as a young child.⁴ This provided part of the foundation for her later participation in NOW and her commitment to women's issues and organizations.

In addition to early influences, the women who founded WSPA also had some form of personal experience with the feminist movement, and in some cases, activist organizing on other issues. Ellen had been a writer and editor for several prominent design publications—*Architecture Plus* and *Architectural Forum*—and through this had developed a strong professional and social network of women in architecture and design. She had participated in a CR group and was one of the founders of the Women's Architectural Review Movement (WARM). Ellen said, "I don't know that I was reading that much about feminism, but I was talking with a lot of feminists. I mean, I knew Phyllis Birkby from way back. I knew Joan Forrester Sprague fifteen years before we did WSPA. I met a lot of good women who shared my view that women were being dumped on, our ideas were being used but not properly sometimes and not with proper recognition."⁵ In her work as a journalist, Ellen had already researched and written on what was going on with minorities and women in architecture: "I think I was aware of women's problems. As you'll see from that *Architectural Forum* article, 'Women in Architecture,' there was a lot of anger going on. A lot of disrespect from men, a lot of keeping them down low . . . not giving them proper [credit] or recognition, I was aware of this. And, I was aware of how I had been treated at Harvard, which was not good."⁶ At the same time, these women wanted the right to be ordinary, even mediocre, by blending into the crowd, which was hardly ever possible because there were simply so few of them in these fields.

Katrin and her partner had lived in Southern California from 1970-1972, where she was involved with Womanspace and its well-known founders: Miriam Shapiro, Sheila de Bretteville, Vicky Hodgetts, and Judy Chicago, among others. Although Katrin wasn't looking for discrimination after she had experienced it during her early training in Germany, she again confronted the limitations of advancing in her first job in an architecture firm in the United States, as one of three women in an office of 110 men. These experiences helped her identify the need for feminist efforts in her field. At the same time her view was different from that of many women, who were just identifying discrimination as a problem: "I had experienced it truly already in my training in Germany, more than the women around me, who came from a

⁴ Weisman interview, 2012.

⁵ Berkeley interview, 2007.

⁶ Ibid.

much more traditional woman's environment. There was a lot of resentment towards their mothers and their upbringing and all that—which I couldn't share, because I had not experienced this.”⁷

Phyllis knew about the women's movement but at first was not interested in it; as a lesbian she thought most feminist efforts were for heterosexual women and had no relevance for her. Then a friend attended a meeting of the National Women's Studies Association, where she witnessed some lesbian activism. She came home to New York City and told Phyllis about it, helping Phyllis realize that perhaps the women's movement might have some relevance to her life. She promptly joined CR Group One (named for its commitment to consciousness raising as a feminist practice) and began participating in a wide variety of activist projects both generally and related to her field of architecture.⁸

Marie had a background in political science, architecture, participatory planning, and work with women in public housing. She had been involved in political activism in the area of worker's rights, housing for migrant workers, and tenant's rights across Massachusetts. She was aware that her need to work while in school multiplied the effects of isolation from other women. She was also the only woman in the group, at the time, who was a mother. These personal experiences contributed to her political consciousness and awareness of the consequence of these differences not just in her relationships with others but as part of her institutional analysis. She and Joan had created several new organizations in Boston and Cambridge that sought to bring these forms of consciousness and activism to design and planning, while bringing women in these fields together.

As white women, the founders of WSPA were perhaps most acutely aware of personal experiences of gender discrimination, but some had also experienced and observed differences based on other factors, including economic class and race. Marie, who identified herself as being of working class background, ran into challenges at Harvard when she needed to work while still a student:

I should mention that [in Fall 1964] I was not only one of two women, but I was also the only student from a working class background, the only student who was paying my own way. And that made a huge difference . . . in some ways the class thing was equally important, maybe even more important to me, than the gender issue . . . Because it was clear I couldn't do what the other students do. I mean, the other students took all these electives . . . [like] filmmaking and sculpture, which I would have loved to take . . . but I just had to take exactly what was required.⁹

⁷ Adam interview, 2011.

⁸ Birkby Finding Aid, Birkby Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

⁹ Kennedy interview, 2007.

Most of the seven founders were connected to each other prior to the creation of WSPA, directly or through social networks established by the women's design groups, conferences, and exhibitions that existed prior to the idea of forming a school. They were alike in many ways, and had many shared experiences, but in other ways they were very different. These differences added richness to their project and also caused frictions. There was a fifteen-year age span between the youngest and oldest; they were from different regions of the United States, and their paths through different educations and fields established an enormous breadth of knowledge and interests, while resulting in very different approaches to the many challenges before them.

Ellen, Leslie, Phyllis were all involved in the New York City-based Alliance of Women in Architecture, created by Regi Goldberg, first called the Women's Architectural Review Movement (WARM). WARM held its first meeting in 1972; Ellen said it was "a great success with an attendance of 80 women."¹⁰ This group sponsored many different activities intended to help and support women in a variety of ways. "We had an exhibition, 'In Due Time.' We had workshops so that people could go for the licensing exam. . . . And not be frightened, to just go for it."¹¹

Another area of difference among members of the group of WSPA founders and participants was sexual orientation, though this was usually discussed fairly covertly in formal or published materials, usually under the umbrella term of "lifestyle" differences. Their clarity of language evolved over time, or perhaps their courage to be more transparent increased, and by the time of the 1979 Guidelines, they wrote, "WSPA encourages the participation of women of diverse ages, personal backgrounds, interests and sexual preference."¹² The term lesbian was used during actual sessions and occasionally in internal WSPA memos. More than half of the founding women identified as heterosexual and three had male partners at the time (Katrin, Ellen, and Bobbie Sue). Marie was a single mother, and Joan was divorced. Leslie had a husband as the enterprise was beginning, but soon left him to come out as a lesbian and move to New York City, where she and Phyllis were a couple for a year or so. "Lifestyle" was in part a code word for sexuality, but

¹⁰ Berkeley interview, 2007.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Memo, October 30, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC. When citing from original WSPA documents in Chapters 4 and 5, I have generally followed the spelling, grammar, and name conventions used by the writer or writers of each document, as I feel this more accurately conveys a sense of the complex, multi-authored nature of the entire enterprise.

also included other forms of difference such as age, politics, region of origin, and residence in urban or rural locations.

Their individual commitment to empowering women and their background in feminist activism became a shared frame through which the founders of WSPA could collectively imagine new ways of studying, teaching, and practicing design. Social movements of the time provided key concepts, language, and opportunities to meet and develop skills, such as the idea of CR, women-only space, and equal rights in the home and workplace. “Just go for it” became the modus operandi of women who wanted to change the design professions to respond to the feminist visions they were working on elsewhere in their lives. Use of techniques of group process and the founders’ multilayered connections to outer movements created a sense of excitement about their shared feminist mission. When the idea of WSPA was generated during that first conversation in St. Louis, it fell on well-prepared, fertile ground. These women felt they were pioneers, and were ready to forge ahead to create new paths for themselves and other women.

WSPA Goals

The women who created WSPA were intent upon weaving together goals and strategies from design education and the women’s movement to establish a new feminist space of creativity with enormously ambitious aspirations. Philosophically, they combined multiple elements of the early 1970s women’s movement and their critique of conventional design education from within to carve out this new educational space for women. Instead of the typical male-dominated, competitive educational settings they had all experienced, they created a supportive, women-only space; instead of hierarchy among students and teachers, they worked to create an egalitarian community of co-participants who were all responsible for teaching and learning. They were committed to pursuing ideas they generated from within as they developed a multifaceted critique of the environmental design fields. Finally, the group sought to use these new spaces and skills to challenge and change the gendered assumptions built into the designed environment.

Many of the goals identified at the outset of WSPA organizing were core to the activism and theoretical foundation of second wave feminism (numbers in parentheses refer to numbered goals listed in Appendix C):

- To identify women's values (1, 2, 8)
- To create women's culture in a separatist—though not necessarily lesbian-identified—setting (2, 3, 5, 8)
- To increase women's visibility and power (4)
- To create and sustain a supportive, non-hierarchical organization run by consensus and without volunteer workers (3, 9, 10, 11)
- To attend to the process of “consciousness raising” (1-8, 10)

Other goals were specific to the experiences of the founding members of the group in the environmental design professions:

- To connect participants' identities as women to their identities as designers on a personal level (1, 2, 8)
- To bring women's values to the environmental design professions (2, 4, 5)

Finally, they wanted to carry out broader, even structural shifts in their fields by:

- Using women's values to critique and change the environmental design professions (5, 6)
- Creating alternative educational and professional organizations (7, 9, 10, 11)

WSPA was intended to be a manifestation of the founders' utopian vision of a completely reformulated concept of the designed environment and of the relationship of women and design education, generated by new ideas about how women could relate to each other in a safe space, learn and teach knowledge and skills basic to planning, design, construction, and related activities, and work with other women to shape improved environments to meet their needs.

Creating a New Educational Space

For Women Only

The founders of WSPA agreed from the start that the school was “for women only,” and sought to express this through organizational, spatial, and symbolic strategies. Figure 1 is a photograph of WSPA participants set up and taken during the 1975 session, in which the group arranged themselves to depict a women's symbol, an image central to the late 1960s and 1970s women's movement (for Figures, see Appendix E, Supplemental File). The conviction that WSPA had to be a single-sex space was generated in

part by feminist theory and separatist, often lesbian, elements of the contemporary women's movement, and in part by the simpler sentiment, shared by women who had come through male-dominated educational systems and been employed in male-dominated work places, that "our first concern was the chance to be together for a little while."¹³

The commitment to creating a women-only environment during the time-limited WSPA sessions was much less about being against the presence of men than it was positive about the opportunity to spend time with other women, in a women-only retreat space. The founders wanted to focus on their own ideas and processes, not spend time explaining to others what they were doing and why. This led to the decision to limit participation not only to women, but also to formally registered women participants. One memo described the positive qualities gained by this temporarily closed space: "Do we not give up certain essential qualities by opening WSPA to the public or to guests? What price do we pay in loss of privacy, time spent in preparation, explanations, etc. There is a quality of unpretentiousness, of 'family' in our intensive interaction with its accompaniment of messes, intimate bulletin board expressions, etc., etc. If people don't have enough time to come and participate fully, should we take time to entertain them?"¹⁴

Outreach and publicity were both very important to WSPA, but even in this area, the organizers established very clear guidelines with gender-related boundaries:

ON THE QUESTION OF REPORTERS

- 1) We would prefer women reporters, both as an encouragement to the furtherance of their profession, and because we do not want to make women at WSPA uneasy.
- 2) However, if a terrific male writer wanted to do a story, we would like to see an interview held, but hopefully in an office or on the phone.
- 3) Any decision for reporters to cover WSPA in Santa Cruz must be made by all coordinators—east and west coasts.
- 4) We consider WSPA a women's retreat; women reporters will be allowed by appointment.¹⁵

While constructing the school as a women-only space perhaps needed no explanation for the lesbian and bisexual-identified participants, many of the women in relationships with men also felt strongly about the value of bonding with other women in a single-sex environment, something many of them had little opportunity for in their professional lives. Being with other women who shared their interests was a welcome change and for many of them, an entirely new experience. The participants with formal planning and design education would almost certainly never have experienced an all-female group in one of these

¹³ WSPA's History, 2, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁴ Minutes, May 21, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁵ Minutes, April 3, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

conventional educational settings. As shown in Figure 2, WSPA provided these women with the chance to teach and learn with a large group of women from a range of backgrounds who shared their interests in space, design, and environments.

Feminist Organizing as a Design Project

The main techniques of feminist organizing used in the process of creating WSPA were not invented by the founders, but they wove these ideas and techniques together in new ways to carry out a specific form of activism related to space, design, and the environment. The process of creating WSPA was, at least for some organizers, a challenge that could be addressed through explicit use of ideas and skills they already knew: “WSPA to a great extent was and is naturally a design problem.”¹⁶ They applied a variety of techniques to the challenge of creating this new educational space, both during the planning for the first session and during the sessions themselves. They explicitly defined feminist organizing as a design project and intentionally used the strategies of design to try to change the male-dominated culture of design and planning. As the original list of 11 goals indicated, they directed their efforts toward multiple goals, including changing the participants in their professional fields, the nature of design and planning education, and the relationship of environmental designers of all kinds to the users of their projects.

The WSPA founders were very conscious of the spatial elements of design education and used WSPA as a laboratory for exploring a multitude of ideas they had about women and design; the space of WSPA was itself a manifestation of their feminist environmental design goals. In addition to creating opportunities for participants to be together in the same literal space during sessions, they also experimented with ideas about scheduling time and activities to help develop group cohesion and a strong sense of community. A wall-size schedule board functioned as a living calendar of both planned and spontaneous activities and communications. This schedule board is visible in the back of the meeting room shown in Figure 2; Figure 3 shows an early version of this calendar in the background of a summer 1975 planning meeting at Ellen’s house in Shaftsbury, Vermont.

¹⁶ Leslie Kanes Weisman and Phyllis Birkby, *The Women’s School of Planning and Architecture (WSPA) Background Facts*, 4, WSPA Records, SSC (hereafter cited as Weisman and Birkby, *WSPA Background Facts*). This appears to be the final draft of the manuscript that was eventually published as “The Women’s School of Planning and Architecture,” in *Learning Our Way: Essays in Feminist Education* (1983), ed. Charlotte Bunch and Sandra Pollack (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press).

The WSPA founders also saw a strong analogy between a designer's method of creative work and the development of the school. The process of creating WSPA was based on the design process they had learned in their own educations—an iterative process of coming up with new solutions and testing them against the goals of the project, in this case their ideas for the school and for broader change in design fields. The group also manifested a strong connection between the social movements of the 1960s and ideas of participatory social and spatial planning, which led to participatory design of the structure of the school. They used both brainstorming and “bug listing,” group process methods that had been developed in the 1960s and were in widespread use at the time, to facilitate production of new ideas without initial judgments. They used these techniques during the development of WSPA and for teaching during WSPA sessions; then they continually sought feedback and rolled the information they gained into the process of planning for future sessions. They encouraged participant involvement in running sessions, and as the project evolved, almost all of the new session coordinators and teaching coordinators had attended prior sessions.

Feminist Topics and Teaching Strategies

Feminist educational content and feminist teaching strategies were woven together throughout the experience of WSPA. Core courses, workshops, and spontaneous activities foregrounded women's ways of being and knowing, new knowledge that was generated by women's concerns for communities and the environment, and opportunities to develop a wide variety of skills in a supportive, all-female environment. The closed setting of the school allowed the participants to develop an intense and intimate experience as they co-imagined new environments with other women.

In the core course, *Women and the Built Environment*, Leslie and Phyllis transformed typical design studio activities by focusing on what women wanted in their ideal environments, no matter how unrealistic or impractical the ideas seemed. In Figure 4, participants brainstorm as a group, and in Figures 5 and 6, they sit on the floor in small groups to design fantasy environments together. In Bobbie Sue's urban design core course, *The Outside of Inside*, they literally took the design process outside to the spaces they were imagining. Figure 7 shows one participant developing her plans on the beach using sand, rocks, and seaweed.

Another area of instruction that was radically reinterpreted for an all-female group was Katrin's Demystification of Tools core course. Participants were provided the opportunity to learn basic woodworking skills in a supportive environment, as shown in Figure 8, and actually build something functional during the session, as shown in Figure 9. This course also provided the context for instruction on basic principles of structures, which were demonstrated and experienced through a series of physical activities shown in Figures 10 and 11. The women in these photographs clearly demonstrate the joy and enthusiasm they experienced while learning and exploring new ideas in an environment with other women. Topics addressed in core courses and workshops varied according to coordinator and participant interests and skills, and evolved over time; Figure 12 shows the Architectural Tapestry core course held in 1976 and Figure 13 depicts the participants in a solar energy workshop of 1979, who constructed the solar collector shown in the photograph in their session.

The records of WSPA describe the hard work and chronic difficulties associated with trying to create a new form of organization that could accomplish the comprehensive goals of the seven founders and the evolving group of new coordinators. The records also demonstrate that in addition to the concentrated effort they expended, participants experienced a great outflowing of enthusiasm, humor, joy, and delight in each other's company. They knew that professional education in architecture and planning was often competitive, grueling, and even brutal; in their project of reinventing this type of education in a feminist image, the women of WSPA turned their imaginations toward pleasure and fun. They organized dances, field trips, and non-competitive games. They made commemorative T-shirts and WSPA necklaces. A folder of WSPA memorabilia includes several pages of WSPA phrases and puns—"WSPA while you work," "Please WSPA," "WSPA in my ear," "Don't WSPA, shout," "Don't shout, WSPA," "WSPAing pines," and "WSPA sistas."¹⁷ The phrase "WSPA sistas" became a theme in outreach and communications, transforming the widespread 1970s notion of sisterhood among women into a particularly WSPA-centered concept.

Various all-school sessions, held in the evenings, were another way of bringing fun and learning together. In 1975, the whole group gathered to design three-dimensional models of the ideal WSPA campus using cake, cookies, and other edible elements, as shown in Figures 14 and 15. This was another

¹⁷ WSPA memorabilia, WSPA Records, SSC.

opportunity to learn about structures, as the pieces of cake needed toothpicks inserted into them to provide internal support for the models. After constructing the cake models, “they discussed the results, sang Happy Birthday to ourselves, and ate the cakes.”¹⁸ A similar project held during an all-school session in 1976, shown in Figure 16, utilized bread and vegetables as the model-building materials. Even the WSPA child care function involved elements of space and design—Figure 17 shows various pieces of furniture rearranged, turned on their sides, and combined with sheets and blankets to create a new play environment for the children who attended WSPA with their mothers.

A number of WSPA activities and rituals were tongue-in-cheek revisions and recreations of some of the traditions and rituals of conventional education in design and planning. One all-school session in 1975, shown in Figure 18, was devoted to awarding the Prix de Biddeford, WSPA’s spoof on the Prix de Rome.¹⁹ In the coordinators’ feminist, egalitarian critique of competitive awards, at WSPA everyone “won” the prize. The actual “prizes” consisted of pieces of two wooden building sculptures that Joan brought back from her trip to Russia immediately prior to the 1975 session. Each person attending the session (including children) received a piece, with the thought that at some future reunion, they could reassemble the original sculptures, a literal manifestation of the group coming together to “build” WSPA again. In 1976, the coordinators created a Sister of the Environment diploma, shown in Figure 19. The diploma was decorated with drawings of carrots, artichokes, and sweet pea flowers, and was ostensibly signed by a group of inspirational historical and allegorical women, including Amelia Earhart, Alice B. Toklas, Harriet B. Tubman, Julia Morgan, Nancy Drew,²⁰ Emma Goldman, Susan B. Anthony, Artemis,²¹ and Sara Lee.²²

During the second session in Santa Cruz, WSPA participants created WSPA jewelry by assembling large steel eyes and bolts to create women’s symbols, strung on leather cords. These necklaces were modeled after a design that seems to have originated in Los Angeles, possibly created by Sheila de

¹⁸ Note on reverse of photographic print, WSPA Records, SSC.

¹⁹ The term Prix de Rome may refer to a number of different national prizes won through competitions that provide the winner with time to study and work in that Italian city. Well-known ones include the Prix de Rome awarded in France in the field of architecture since 1720, and the Rome Prize awarded by the American Academy in Rome since 1894.

²⁰ Nancy Drew was the intrepid teenage heroine of a long and popular series of mystery stories for girls written by various authors under the pseudonym Carolyn Keene. The series started in 1939, so all of the WSPA founders and participants would have been familiar with the character of Nancy.

²¹ Artemis is the Greek goddess of the hunt.

²² Sara Lee was an American manufacturer of packaged and frozen foods, notably cheesecake and other desserts.

Bretteville, a co-founder of the Woman's Building in Los Angeles. This symbol was one of the primary graphic elements in the 1974 poster for the conference held at the Woman's Building in LA that year. Figure 20 shows how Marilyn Mason Sommer added her piece of the Prix de Biddeford prize to her necklace and saved it; other participants can be seen wearing these necklaces during the 1975 session in Figures 9 and 10.

Finally, documentation of the WSPA experience was a priority, at least during the first two years. Activities designed to teach participants to assist in this process were woven throughout the summer programs. The original intention was to document WSPA for a book and film, but these skills could also be carried over to other feminist endeavors. Many different people were involved in keeping notes, taking photographs, making audio recordings, and filming activities during the sessions, and although the planned book and film were never completed, these materials live on in the archives. Phyllis was particularly interested in film documentation of the sessions, but others were part of the process as well. Figure 21 shows Lorna McNeur with her camera at the 1975 session, and Figure 22 shows participants in the 1976 session learning to splice film.

Spatial Practices to Support Being Together

The single-sex environment of the school was a foundational aspect of the founders' vision of feminist education. This environment was protected through isolation and deliberate limits that fostered "creation of a strong group identity" through "closed boundaries—no guests, no part-time participants, no publicity"—at least during the time of the actual session meetings.²³ The closed nature of each summer program was only one of the spatial practices embodied in the organization of the WSPA sessions. Their design for a new space was expressed through many other decisions as well, including the notion of national mobility and the ideal qualities they sought in facilities for the summer sessions.

Because WSPA moved each year, an enormous amount of effort went into an intentional search for school sites that were not in urban environments, that provided a "neutral" built environment, and that offered close contact with attractive natural settings such as seaside or mountain recreation areas. WSPA organizers typically found this by renting space on college campuses. In addition to a certain level of

²³ Weisman and Birkby, WSPA Background Facts, 10, WSPA Records, SSC.

isolation, they sought living situations in which the WSPA attendees would stay together as much as possible, uninterrupted by interaction with outsiders. For example, even when staying on a college campus, they preferred that the WSPA group would not have to share dining facilities with other groups that might be in residence on the same campus at the same time.

These ideas about the material space of the sessions were codified in the 1979 Guidelines in the directive that new coordinators look for: “college facilities which have been reasonably acceptable. However, cost, the lack of control over such facilities, poor food and lousy environment have been frequent problems.”²⁴ They suggested that in the future, WSPA try to find “a less expensive, more private facility” with “access to nature,” perhaps “a rural retreat with camping and cabin and lodge facilities,” but “not too primitive, [as we] need hot showers, electricity, phone, tables for drawing, large meeting room, etc.”²⁵ An ideal setting was “rural but semi-civilized . . . near a small town with Xerox, laundry, bar, potential for field trips or local resource people, accessibility to major airport.”²⁶ A keen understanding of existing women’s spaces was part of networking and publicity for the school: Phyllis took special responsibility for posting publicity flyers at women’s bookstores and restaurants and in women’s bathrooms, and let others know, “I’ve found Ladies Rooms to be a safe place at schools as sometimes they get ripped off (or taken off) of bulletin boards by the curious and/or hostile.”²⁷

Creating a Feminist Organization

A huge part of creating a new educational space was solving the organizational problems of making the school happen. The women who founded WSPA were willing to take on the enormous task of creating a functioning entity that could achieve its ambitious goals; they were women who had created other organizations and brought a multitude of organizational skills to these challenges. Their commitment to the project provided the energy to rethink everything from the beginning—their philosophy of education; the structure of the group; its legal organization; goals, policies and programs; titles and individual responsibilities; communication methods; and financial matters. Even for seven or eight well-prepared feminists, creating WSPA was a lot to take on. Added to that were the challenges of doing this when the

²⁴ Memo, October 30, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Phyllis Birkby letter to distribution list, March 31, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

members of the founding group had never worked together as a whole, they were located in disparate parts of the country, they were from different professional fields and personal backgrounds, and they had limited time and money to make their plans a reality. Utopian aspirations were probably necessary to believe they could overcome the multitude of challenging circumstances they faced.

Archival materials demonstrate that the group maintained a high level of written communication and thoroughly documented their efforts, especially in the early phases of the project. During the first year of planning, an enormous number of memos were sent around by mail among the eight to ten people most involved in the early planning. Meetings of the organizing group were usually structured by a formal written request for agenda items, a detailed agenda sent out before the meeting, hand-written minutes taken by one and sometimes two different people (one in the morning and another in the afternoon), and comprehensive typed minutes written up and sent to all members of the coordinating group after the meeting. Writing and distributing thorough minutes was a particularly daunting task, as some meetings lasted an entire day, or occasionally even longer. Later on, newsletters were created to communicate important WSPA information and updates to those outside the formal organizing group. Many of the organizational skills that facilitated these meetings and communications were developed through the participants' education and professional practice experience in business and the design professions. These steps in organizing, planning, and documenting communication were routine in a well-run office of the time, and would have been either explicitly taught or quickly absorbed in the design firms or municipal planning settings in which many of them had worked.

In addition to the formal memos and minutes that were circulated among all members of the group, additional communications took place among individuals through letters, postcards, phone calls, and other personal contacts. These communications elaborated on the group decision-making processes; they also complicated these processes by creating subgroups and small coalitions within the larger group. The most challenging of these subgroup problems was the division between the East Coast and the West Coast.²⁸ In the original group of founders, most were in New York City and Boston. Leslie was located in Detroit, but soon joined the New York City group geographically through her move to New York City,

²⁸ This was a problem in other feminist groups of the time, signaling not only geographical distance, but sometimes a rift between what was perceived as a New York-centered intellectual strand of feminism and other elements seen as more grassroots in origin.

professionally through her new teaching position at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and personally through her relationship with Phyllis. This left Bobbie Sue Hood as the sole West Coast participant for the first year. Though Bobbie Sue brought a perspective to many issues that was different from the other participants, the more serious East Coast-West Coast split did not develop until the second year, when there were more West Coast participants, resulting in two different planning groups with different approaches working on planning the second session in Santa Cruz.

The women who organized the first session in Maine were strongly committed to the idea that the second session should be held on the West Coast and organized by women in that region. When planning for the second year commenced, additional women from the West Coast were involved, and were instrumental contributors to the group's decision to hold the 1976 session at the University of California at Santa Cruz. However the two groups struggled around many issues, including the nature of the core courses to be offered, who would be part of the group of teaching coordinators, the site, child care plans, and graphics for the brochure. In the minutes these issues were often described simply as East Coast vs. West Coast disagreements, but geography was in part a proxy for other concerns around the philosophy of the school that seemed harder to address, especially at a distance and primarily through written communications. A few phone calls were placed between groups while meetings were in process, but these were generated by time pressures and tended to exacerbate rather than resolve other conflicts.

Archival documents indicate that the East Coast group was not happy with the overall tone of the 1976 session, concerned that it was too focused on development of professional skills and not enough on the opportunity for women to just spend time together. The East Coast group also felt that the brochure, which was produced by the West Coast group, was "too professional—i.e., not alternative culture enough and not enough in the spirit of what they feel WSPA should be."²⁹ The West Coast group felt a lack of trust from the East Coast group, and complained that they were being pressured to send replies more often and in more detail than necessary, requiring photocopies and postage they could not afford. Both groups were frustrated by difficulties in cross-country communication and differences in organizational style. The intergroup conflicts were complicated by interpersonal tension between a number of individuals that simmered behind the group processes. Bobbie Sue tried to lower the stakes by choosing not to be a teaching

²⁹ Meeting notes, undated (probably May 1, 1976), 2, WSPA Records, SSC.

coordinator that year, but tensions remained, though they seemed to have subsided by planning for the 1978 session, which was held once again on the East Coast, in Rhode Island.

Gathering Resources

Like many other feminist organizations of the same period, WSPA's ambitious plans were constructed out of very limited resources. The organizers wanted WSPA not to be a volunteer effort, but in most ways it was. Time was carved out of other responsibilities, seed money was contributed by the founders from their own pockets, other resources were extracted surreptitiously from their employers—stamps, copies, phone calls on WATS (Wide Area Telephone Service) lines. In one case the office contributions were acknowledged: "Gail's [Frese's] office will be formally given recognition of their 'contribution' so that they might take a tax break from it. (They have 'donated' #10 envelopes, stamps [a few], telephone calls, paper, offset press time, and lots of Gail's time)." ³⁰

Requesting help with mailing expenses was a constant theme in memos and newsletters: "NOTE: Please send 2 self-addressed stamped envelopes . . . as mailing costs are a real hardship." ³¹ "Get your name on the list [for WSPA '76] as it is first come first serve. And send stamps or money." ³² "Please try to rip off as much as possible in terms of Xeroxing and mailing, etc. Even phone calls. This has been standard operating procedure on the east coast all year; we can't expect to get anywhere with expense accounts, like GM." ³³ Finding time for planning and participating in the consensus-building process was an ongoing challenge as well, as most of the women involved worked full time and WSPA activities had to be fit into everyone's busy schedules, leaving organizers occasionally begging for a more timely response to memos and questions. "There was a poor response to the questionnaire, even from the coordinators. . . . In the future please send a written response if it is requested. Everyone." ³⁴

The financial side of the enterprise was a drain on organizers from the start. Each of the original group put in some startup funds of around \$50, ³⁵ and then was to keep track of her own expenses, with the understanding that there might or might not be enough money left after the session for later reimbursement.

³⁰ Minutes, April 3, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

³¹ WSPA Newsletter, October 31, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

³² Minutes, December 7, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

³³ Minutes, June 5-6, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

³⁴ Minutes, December 7, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

³⁵ Katrin Adam letter to distribution list, May 8, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

The original co-partnership agreement, signed near the end of May 1975, included a plan for how excess funds would be distributed, but this never came about.³⁶ In April 1976, while planning for the second session was well under way, Katrin sent out final details on the financial summary of the 1975 session: “To all original WSPA founders, mothers, dear Ellen, Phyllis, Bobbie Sue, Marie, Joan and Leslie: I am also enclosing the income and expense sheet for 1975 and you can see that we have indeed had a loss of \$24.41, each partner \$3.05. It certainly does not account for all the other expenses we each had, but that of course does not count. WHAT A SYSTEM! By not reimbursing all expenses, we were able to leave \$541.59 in the WSPA account at the end of 1975, to be used as working capital. (Which is of course not taxable.)”³⁷ In general, coordinators did not pay tuition and were reimbursed for a portion of their travel expenses. After 1978, it was agreed that they should also receive honoraria of \$25-300 per session.³⁸

The overall lack of resources contributed to organizational conflict and challenges, as every financial limitation had consequences for program development and participants. In 1976, the entire group of coordinators—both East Coast and West Coast—was committed to having a session on the West Coast, but for several of them, their final personal decision against it was based on cost. The projected expense of holding the session at the University of California at Santa Cruz was \$65 per person higher than the other available option, and Joan and another coordinator, Mary Ann McCarthy, were uncomfortable about committing to the more expensive location. This prompted an intense meeting with a lengthy discussion of WSPA principles as well as the impending decision, which led up to one of the rare telephone calls: “It is important to realize that the decision to go to Santa Cruz was made on a multitude of variables . . . With some dissent, it was decided that voting, per se, was antithetical to the philosophy under which WSPA was founded. We feel strongly that our founding philosophy is to be maintained, even though this may engender long discussions and difficult re-prioritizing at meetings. We are a very conscientious bunch, and intend to remain that way.”³⁹ Joan and Mary Ann McCarthy held strongly to the position not to go to Santa Cruz, but reserved the right to continue to be involved in session planning even if that were the final outcome, which it was. The financial tension was increased later when they discovered that Santa Cruz was going to charge an even higher than expected fee for children: “It was an unpleasant surprise to learn that children will not

³⁶ Co-partnership agreement, May 24, 1975, WSPA Records, SSC.

³⁷ Katrin Adam letter to distribution list, April 2, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

³⁸ Katrin Adam letter to distribution list, October 28, 1978, WSPA Records, SSC.

³⁹ Minutes, February 21, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

get a break from the college in terms of money. We would like the west coast to scour their heads trying to see a way to change this. It is agreed that child care for WSPA participants is a vital part of the philosophy, and what appears to be \$200 per child is simply too much to ask of anyone. If we must subsidize this, we will clearly lose vast sums of money—or so it seems at first glance.”⁴⁰

Organizational challenges evolved during the eight-year period of WSPA’s planning and programming. Organizational stability was hampered by multiple coordinators, most of them working together on this type of educational project for the first time, planning sessions in a new location each year, all the while trying to rethink and recreate everything based on feminist values that they did not always agree on, and that they often lacked the resources to carry out. There were tensions among members of the group about which goal was more important—helping women succeed in the fields as they existed, even though male-dominated, or working on redefining the fields. On top of these differences and conflicts, the combination of limited internal resources, changing outside circumstances for coordinators, and the natural ebb and flow of each individual’s interests and time contributed to an organization that was constantly having to reinvent itself.

Breaking Down Barriers

Part of creating a new space for women in design was imagining the new reality; the other part was breaking down boundaries that structured the existing ways of doing things. The WSPA founders were inspired by other social movements that had taken place since the early 1960s, including civil rights, women’s rights, and the development of interdisciplinary academic fields such as environmental psychology. They used ideas and activist practices they learned from these endeavors to enact change. Instead of separation between fields, they worked to create alignment and overlap; instead of increasing the power differential between professionals and their clients, they chose to re-envision design and planning education for a new, broader audience of both professionally trained women and community members who could work together to create environments for women’s full range of needs and desires.

⁴⁰ Minutes, April 3, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

Interdisciplinary Approaches

The WSPA coordinators had diverse experiences within the spatial design fields and different backgrounds in feminist and political activist projects. They brought these diverse perspectives together to form an interdisciplinary approach to the shared goal of transforming their professions of architecture and planning, as well as related fields such as landscape architecture, environmental psychology, interior design, historic preservation, and building construction. It was important to them to organize the activities of the school in a way that responded to their ideas about connections between women and environmental design activities rather than conforming to the existing boundaries and hierarchies of the professions. From the start they were frustrated that the school's name did not reflect their broad range of interests in "architectural journalism, landscape architecture, social planning, environmental psychology, environmental scale sculpture, graphics, weaving, and other related endeavors."⁴¹ As a result, they organized the school setting to reduce barriers that divided established areas of knowledge and different categories of people.

Part of their critique of design education was of its hierarchy and competitiveness; in contrast, they created an environment in which women could learn in their own way and develop their skills in male-dominated fields in a more supportive environment. In response to the conventional structure of the curriculum that divided subject areas into discrete areas of knowledge and separate, sequentially ordered courses, they encouraged linking and sharing among programmatic offerings. They carried out these intentions by keeping all participants together in a shared space for each session as much as was possible and by limiting outside visitors and activities. Instead of the hierarchy of faculty and students, they asserted that all participants had something to share, and created opportunities for women to just spend time with each other in a supportive and non-competitive environment. Pre-planned activities related to environmental design were punctuated by sessions on topics that arose spontaneously on a wide variety of topics, including women's psychology, astrology, and menopause.

The national scope of WSPA's ambitions, carried out by creating a mobile educational program, was another element of breaking down boundaries and reaching as broad a group of women as possible. Outside of the United States, WSPA was known internationally and there were some attendees at summer

⁴¹ Weisman and Birkby, WSPA Background Facts, 17, WSPA Records, SSC.

sessions and the final conference from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Denmark. Finally, Phyllis had many contacts with women architects in Europe and worked on planning an international WSPA program, though this never took place.

Use of CR

Consciousness raising (CR) was a feminist social practice that was central to the second wave women's movement (Evans 2003, Rosen 2006). At its simplest, CR consisted of a group discussion in which participants each had time to speak freely about their thoughts and lives, focusing on their experiences of being female. Diverse women in all sorts of situations and locations organized CR groups that met on a regular basis, often weekly, sometimes continuing to meet for years. CR groups were sponsored by organizations such as NOW as well as being independent. The guidelines for CR were simple; genuine and honest communication was the priority, and "cross talk," or responding verbally as each member of a group spoke about her life, was minimal or disallowed entirely. These deceptively simple guidelines created a framework in which women could begin to identify old beliefs and patterns around gender norms, change their personal values and behaviors, and create connections that led to collective actions in society. The goal was to reduce boundaries between women and enhance connections and support for each other as "sistas."

The women involved in WSPA had been exposed to the practice of CR in other feminist groups in which they had worked before they met in St. Louis in 1974, and brought this technique to WSPA meetings and activities. Some women's design groups began their existence as CR groups; others used CR techniques as part of their ongoing dialogue process and to manage contentious issues when they arose. Katrin had been involved with a group in Los Angeles started by Miriam Shapiro; Phyllis had been involved with the self-named CR Group 1 in New York City; Leslie had been part of CR groups with NOW members in Detroit, and Ellen had participated in groups organized in New York City "for women who were in architecture in some way"⁴²:

We [were] generally talking about what the heck was going on in your office that you didn't like and everybody would come in and give advice. We had consciousness-raising groups . . . meeting at our homes. We were doing a lot to make women more visible. At these consciousness-raising groups . . . we were supposed to talk on a different subject each time in our group of ten or fifteen

⁴² Berkeley interview, 2007.

women, like, “Why did you go into architecture? And who was your best professor? And what do you like or not like?” And we would share and go around the table, go around the living room and contribute our own.⁴³

The CR group that Ellen was part of may have started out focusing on educational, professional, and work-related issues, but did not stop there:

At one point at one of these meetings, we get there, we’re all assembled and this woman breaks into tears and we thought, “What the heck is going on here?” What happened was, she said her guy that she was living with, was beating on her. He’d get drunk and whack her around. And we talked about that the entire evening. By the end of that meeting she had the guts . . . to say I’m going to go back there and clear out, or kick him out, whichever it was. . . . I love that, we gave her the guts [to do something] . . . So we were a strong, bonded group. And the things you said there, didn’t go anywhere else.⁴⁴

CR was essential to the beginning of WSPA but its importance shifted over time. In 1974, while a collaboration with the Women’s Design Center was still being discussed, one co-founder looked forward to creating “the kind of separatist school and consciousness raising experience that the [Women’s Design Center] school will proclaim itself to be.”⁴⁵ By the time of planning for the 1979 session, CR had become less important: “The feedback we got from NY and Joan was that WSPA ought to focus more on the action end of the spectrum rather than the ‘consciousness raising’ end. We agree. Examples suggested for action include 1) doing something for the city, 2) lobbying and organizing, 3) a ‘how to’ workbook, 4) some hands-on building.”⁴⁶ Some continued to like the personal exploration exercises that had been used in the past, but felt that “consciousness raising is old hat to most, and not something we need to do, other than recognize that it is a byproduct of everything else we do.”⁴⁷ After the first few years, CR was no longer understood as a foundational practice that led to understanding and activism, but rather something that was expected to grow out of shared understanding and action. But the shared understanding was often lost without the dedicated time together that CR had provided for the constantly changing group of coordinators and participants.

Throughout WSPA’s active existence, the practical challenge of making the sessions happen interfered with the organizers’ philosophical desire to create space for feminist thinking about design and the environment and connect with their WSPA “sistas.” The need to focus on tasks, necessity of

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ellen Perry Berkeley memo to distribution list, October 23, 1974, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁴⁶ Meeting notes, February 4, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

communicating through written memos, and loss of time for face-to-face CR meant the loss of expressive speaking and concentrated listening that helped the group bond and hold it together during difficult times.

In 1976 Katrin wrote a poignant letter to the members of the original organizing group:

I miss not having any personal contact with you and am quite despaired each time another memo arrives. It is a pity that we have not given us the chance to sit together, just we seven, relaxed, to discuss and to decide where to and how we want to go on with WSPA. We all have a big chunk invested in it. Can we learn to accept and deal with the other's expectations, sensitivity, peculiarity, circumstances in life at a particular moment without causing each other so much distress and anger? I very much hope so, it certainly will always be my goal as I see myself involved with you in WSPA for many years to come. Love to you all with much trust in each, and all of our abilities!⁴⁸

In a handwritten note on one copy of this letter, she added, "WSPA is going through heavy waves again. I do not have enough energy & strength & time to get heavily involved."⁴⁹

Commitment to Consensus

Like many social change focused organization of the time, WSPA was based on a collectivist model of organizing and action (Rothschild-Whitt 1979, cited in Ferree and Hess 2000, 57). The founders wanted to work in a cooperative, non-authoritarian way, and needed an organizing concept very different from the conventional educations and workplaces they had experienced. The egalitarian, utopian strategies of early 1970s feminist activism provided a fitting model for WSPA's structure and programs. WSPA was to provide an *alternative* experience, providing new knowledge and a form of learning that was not available in design and planning schools and office settings of the time. WSPA was to be an educational space, but a supportive and non-competitive one in which founders and participants could critique the environmental design professions from the inside through CR, focus on women's values and culture, use of consensus for decision making, and imagine new forms for the built environment.

A key idea underlying WSPA's founding was the intention of the founders to create a non-hierarchal organizational entity that would evolve over time. This particular set of values was central to many of the feminist goals they were bringing to their project, and was manifested in many documents and writings related to WSPA's organization strategies, in the individual writings of some of the founders, and in numerous group communication documents that were part of the ongoing process of organizing the

⁴⁸ Katrin Adam letter to distribution list, April 2, 1976, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

summer sessions and the final conference. Concern about avoiding hierarchy was pervasive at WSPA, sometimes going beyond the relations between people to the ways in which information was compiled and shared. The written notes occasionally include comments such as “generally the things discussed can be divided into the following groups . . . (note: their order is arbitrary, it has nothing to do with their level of importance)”⁵⁰ and “Note: ordering has nothing to do with importance or lack of importance thereof.”⁵¹

WSPA’s initial goals did not include any specific or completely explicit statements about creating a non-hierarchal organization, although this is somewhat implied in Goal 8, “to decondition ourselves from our competitive male-defined and male-identified educations and to rediscover, validate, and affirm our processes as women.”⁵² Movement toward a non-hierarchical structure for WSPA appeared in a variety of phrases in early planning documents, many of which focused on revising the roles of teacher and learner—“We should not distinguish between faculty and students” (initial goals list in the archives, also published in Weisman and Birkby 1983, 226), “we are non-hierarchical in concept . . . we do not try to duplicate existing programs in conventional schools” (226), and “each WSPA participant is encouraged to share her knowledge, skills, ideas and questions” (224). A number of goals contain phrases that point toward characteristics often associated with women in the cultural feminist framework of the time (Taylor and Rupp 1993), such as “our values and identities as women” (Goal 1), “the particular qualities, concerns, and abilities that we as women bring to our work” (Goal 2), and “our unique experiences and our common concerns and perceptions as women within male-dominated fields” (Goal 5).

Related to these notions of the ideal, non-hierarchal women’s community was a critique of the idea of “stars,” a “star headset,” and “the star system.” These ideas appeared a number of times in different documents related to WSPA, from meeting minutes to the 1979 guidelines.⁵³ Looking back at WSPA’s accomplishments, Leslie and Phyllis wrote in 1983 that “Many of our decisions clearly reflect the importance we place on the avoidance of a star headset, either among ourselves or in the way we were perceived by others” (230). They used this philosophical stance to explain WSPA’s collective organizational structure, including the decision to list the session organizers’ credentials as a group rather than as individuals and not listing the names of who was conducting which courses, all out of the desire “to

⁵⁰ Meeting notes, December 11, 1978, WSPA Records, SSC (note in parentheses in original).

⁵¹ Agenda, January 5-6 Meeting, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁵² Memo, October 30, 1979, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁵³ Ibid.

avoid the divisiveness that is inevitably created by competitive star tripping” (230). At the same time, they tried to cast their collective persona as expressing “a collection of strong and very different individuals who supported and complemented each other” rather than an attempt to “subsume or fuse our separate identities” (231).

The concept of “star tripping” originated in the feminist movement of the early 1970s as one of the criticisms of male-dominated and masculinist culture that enforced non-hierarchy as a form of “political correctness” among women, with a particular intensity among lesbians. The intense idealism of the period sometimes led to a kind of fanaticism within cultural feminism, or the notion that certain qualities associated with women were superior and not to be violated if one wanted to remain in the feminist or lesbian community (Faderman 1981, Taylor and Rupp 1992).

The concept of nonhierarchy became an inflexible dogma. Collective decision making was encouraged, as was communal living, in which privileges and responsibilities were to be shared equally. There were to be no leaders. When the mass media focused attention on one woman, the group often became concerned about “star tripping” and support for her intentions fell away; this happened to Rita Mae Brown, who had been a great hero in the lesbian-feminist community before her popular success, but became the target of strong criticism after. It was even speculated that star tripping was the reason for the failure of ancient matriarchies, in which the queens eventually took too much power for themselves. The modern Lesbian Nation was determined not to repeat such a mistake. (Faderman 1991, 230)

The origin of a related phrase used in reference to architecture seems to be around the same time. Denise Scott Brown wrote a paper in the mid-1970s entitled “Sexism and the Star System in Architecture,”⁵⁴ and presented it at the Oregon Conference in 1975, so the WSPA founders would have known of this phrase and the ideas it represented.

In a parallel set of developments, Joan and Marie had worked together as early as 1973 to create the Open Design Office (ODO), a non-hierarchical office and work environment. The ODO was created in large part to provide a work environment “where architecture could be practiced without bosses or employees” (37).⁵⁵ According to Joan, the founders of the ODO “shared the common experience of working as a minority in a male-dominated profession. We began wondering ‘What would a women’s office be like?’ and then we began to talk about really trying to do it” (36). Marie was willing to try a

⁵⁴ This paper was eventually published in *Architecture: A Place for Women* as “Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture” (Denise Scott Brown, in Berkeley and McQuaid 1989).

⁵⁵ Undated tear sheet of an article by William Ronco, “Reshaping The Office,” in *Working Papers, 1976 (Fall)*, 36-38, Carton 5, in Joan Forrester Sprague Papers, 1935-1998, 88-M103—98-M166, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (hereafter cited as Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library.)

different sort of organizational structure for the office because, she said, “I had already been an employee . . . and I had been a boss too. But I didn’t like what happened in either position” (37). The office was organized not only to reshape conventional employer-employee relationships, but also invent new designer-client relationships and business financial structures, all in a manner that would allow women to explore new work habits and management strategies “without any male influence” (37).

Joan and Marie reported in Ronco’s article that these changes required more flexibility and more communication than they were used to in previous offices, and that this led to other changes from standard practice as well. The women participating in the ODO discovered that they all disliked doing working drawings, so they experimented with simpler drawings that allowed for more input from the contractors. At the same time they emphasized that this new model of practice was neither design nor work “by committee,” but rather a different form of work based on a peer-sharing model of responsibility and collective process (38).⁵⁶

Joan continued to work through some of these ideas in papers she wrote for courses she took in her organizational development program, and especially focused on some of the difficulties of achieving consensus. In October 1975, after the first WSPA session, she described her dissatisfaction with conventional architectural office settings and her process of “designing” an office organization with other women. She then went on to discuss the development of WSPA and some of the dilemmas she faced in that process:

The school began through conversations with other women who were practicing, teaching, and studying architecture and planning. . . . Some of us had been friends and had worked together in other women’s architectural organizations. Some were members of our office. . . . We talked about consensual decision-making, and a supportive and flexible organization. . . . We would develop the organizational structure as we developed the school.⁵⁷

Joan had originally suggested that WSPA be affiliated with the Women’s Design Center but this did not ultimately work out, although she reported in her paper that this did not result in any hostility and was actually an important step in WSPA’s formation. Still, consensus was difficult to achieve.

During the months after the decision that WSPA and the Women’s Design Center would not work together, and prior to the first session, Joan was involved in other activities that took her to the West Coast.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Joan Forrester Sprague, A108 Learning Paper, October 1975, 2, Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library.

During the time that she was away, organizers in different locations encountered a variety of communication challenges so that by the time Joan was once again involved in the process, it was difficult for her to step back in. “I had a brief opportunity to work with another of the group of eight on a response.”⁵⁸ The words we saw were confusing to both of us; under pressure of time we replied jointly. . . . I arrived back in the east to find that two writers of the material to which we responded were greatly offended by me. I worked hard to mend fences but was also very hurt by their misunderstanding of my response.”⁵⁹ Joan put a great deal of effort into other essential tasks such as organizing and coordinating printing of the catalog, but “this final work left me drained of enthusiasm for a project that I had expected would be enjoyable and exciting.”⁶⁰

Other disagreements between coordinators arose, Joan continued to feel uncomfortable with those who had criticized her earlier, and there were difficulties due to the challenge of the group’s long-distance consensual decision-making process. Joan observed that “commitment to the actualization of the school was the topmost priority” and wondered in hindsight if this was not wise, if time should have been found “for confirming supportiveness of one another.”⁶¹ After an analysis of what worked in their group process—and what did not—Joan concluded that she did not wish to continue as a coordinator unless she felt “a higher level of trust from two of the others. I wish to work toward that goal, but it is not clear that this goal is of interest to the other two.”⁶² Convinced as she was that “emotions are facts that must be resolved in order to achieve a high level of health in an organization,” she considered using this paper as a means of communicating with the other two coordinators, though she realized that this might be perceived as focusing too much on her own interests and needs, perhaps a concern generated by the feminist focus on avoiding “star tripping.”

In a second paper for the same course, Joan wrote about her decision to “try out” her essay on another one of the WSPA coordinators to get some feedback. The other coordinator reported some of the same feelings as the ones Joan had experienced, agreeing that (according to Joan), “she expressed a feeling of getting mixed messages, some of which bordered on accusations. She was questioning her own

⁵⁸ At this point in time there were still eight women involved in the planning process.

⁵⁹ Sprague A108 Learning Paper, October 1975, 3, Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library.

⁶⁰ Sprague A108 Learning Paper, October 1975, 4. Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

intentions and feeling disoriented. She said she had fleeting urges to turn over the files and walk away from her involvement in WSPA, although the school had been very important to her, and she had devoted an enormous amount of time to it.”⁶³ Joan reported getting a better understanding of how she was perceived and what she was experiencing from this meeting, and as a result, agreed to send her paper to all of the other coordinators, along with a description of the stages of group development.

Joan’s conclusion in this paper was a re-commitment to her ideal purpose, which was “within a flexible organization to establish a supportive interaction and high trust level as intrinsic to learning between coordinators as well as between coordinators and participants of WSPA,” and a means to achieve this purpose—“to work with those interested in establishing an openly-chosen structure to outline priorities and alternatives for what the structure might be.”⁶⁴ Finally, she described WSPA as having “rejected conventional bureaucracy as a legitimate organizing principle” and as a result, the organization “must now face the task of defining the alternative structure clearly, or fall prey to uncontrolled, unproductive emotionalism and divisive impulse.”⁶⁵

Joan and Marie came into WSPA with a well-developed set of skills from working on this non-hierarchical women’s design practice, in which they had experimented with a wide variety of new group process and decision-making strategies. Their commitment to the egalitarian organizing principles of WSPA grew out of their experiences in the women-only work setting of the ODO and a several-year-long process of experimenting and adjusting their methods of accomplishing design and construction work within this group. Joan believed strongly that the strategy they had used to “design” the ODO could also be used to “design” the school, but the process encountered obstacles such as a new set of unfamiliar tasks (such as planning, organizing, and publicizing a school session in a different geographical location each year) and a new group of women coordinators each time, who were also dispersed across the United States. Given the burden of accomplishing these tasks within a tight schedule, the commitment to flexibility and the high level of communication established in the ODO could not be sustained, and the group process Joan hoped for did not develop.

⁶³ Sprague A108 Learning Paper #II, More About WSPA, October 22, 1975, 1, Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library.

⁶⁴ Sprague A108 Learning Paper #II, More About WSPA, October 22, 1975, 3, Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The concepts of non-hierarchical organization, consensus-based decision making, reluctance to put forth individual accomplishments, avoidance of “star tripping,” and dislike of the “star system” in architecture, were generated in different social locations within the women’s movement of the time, yet clustered together in both intention and result within WSPA. “Star tripping” was drawn from a feminist context in which women were not to have ambitions or desire success that would place them above or in front of other women, while the notion of the “star system” in architecture was used by women in architecture to critique a male-focused and dominated field in which women could not achieve success because they were defined, by their sex, as *not* being able to be “stars.” Other concepts that contributed to WSPA’s egalitarian organizational practices were drawn from the founders’ practical experiences in reformulating a conventional design office to accommodate the needs and preferences of a particular group of women.

These different strands of thought and behavior were present simultaneously within WSPA, but grew from different sources and functioned in different ways within its various activities and outcomes. At least for a time, they allowed for a highly productive resonance between different strands of feminist theory and practice that aimed at slightly different but related goals, and helped channel energy from different sources into pulling in the same direction, at least for a time.

Broader Aspirations and Challenges

Most of WSPA’s original eleven goals focused on creating a new educational space to support women in design and imagining what would happen in that educational space. But two items on the original list specifically addressed a larger set of concerns—“to achieve a collective visibility and power base for ourselves within which to effect a change in priorities and practices within environmental design,” and “to provide a forum within which to critically examine and redefine the nature of professionalism and professional practice.”

In many ways WSPA was a social and psychological container in which the founders continued to develop and pursue the ideas that had generated the energy to create WSPA in the first place. They were concerned, individually and as a group, about a wide variety of issues related to women and the environment and the fields and professions involved in environmental design. They wanted to overcome

not just the sexism of the planning and design professions, but the gender assumptions embodied in the planned and built environment. One anecdote from an interview emphasized the mutually reinforcing male domination of both the design professions and the designed environment. One of the founders described her frustration while taking the architectural registration exam in an architecture school building that had only one women's bathroom, on the main floor:

The assumption was, since it was an architectural school, women would only come into the first floor, to look at the exhibits there. So when I took my licensing exam there, sometime in the '70s, there was a huge crowd of people. They were all men. I was the only woman. And it was on one of the upper floors and there was no women's bathroom [on any of the upper floors] And in fact, I had just gotten my period that day and I remember thinking, "I hope I bleed all over the floor and really freak out these *men!*" . . . I just went into the men's room, 'cause you know . . . It's timed, it's hideous. . . . I did pass. And you know, I don't know if I did or didn't irritate the men by going into their bathroom, but to hell with it.⁶⁶

The central task these women set for themselves—create an alternative form of design and planning education—was part of a broader critique of both the ontology and the epistemology of professional design fields. They wanted to critique ways of being that are characteristic of the professions—detachment, intellectualism, hierarchy, and disconnection from those ultimately most affected by design decisions—as well as redefine what counts as knowledge in these fields and intervene in the system of who is allowed to create that knowledge. They wanted to create a new national organization that would affect not only the people in the professions, but the professions themselves. And they went even further, to critique the gendered construction of space and push back on their observations and personal experiences that the built environment itself repressed women. They fully intended to create safe space for women to imagine not only new designed forms but also whole new worlds in which women's needs were primary.

Ambitious Goals, Insufficient Resources

WSPA's founders and the coordinators who followed them in running WSPA managed to implement enormously ambitious plans and projects for more than seven years. They worked through the challenges of organizing the enterprise as a whole, planned five summer sessions, carried out four of them, and participated in running a major national conference. The knowledge and skills these women had developed in their professional educations and various feminist organizations such as NOW helped them overcome obstacles such as lack of money, time pressure, the stresses of a collective planning process, and

⁶⁶ Kennedy interview, 2008.

minimal additional support, at least for a while. Their original intentions encompassed multilayered utopian aspirations, any single one of which would have been difficult to achieve. But with eleven goals that were not always pointing in the same direction, and funds that were barely sufficient to cover the basic costs of the summer programs, coordinators had to cope with financial strain and lack of other material resources on top of the challenges they faced in creating a viable new organization.

Given the lack of outside organizational and financial support for most of these events—in large part due to the WSPA founders' philosophical commitment to ideological and financial independence—the number and scope of these activities were quite an accomplishment. But even the enthusiastic personal commitment of a significant number of women inspired by utopian feminist ideals was not enough to keep WSPA going indefinitely. WSPA came to the end of its active programming in the early 1980s for multiple reasons: lack of sufficient financial support from its own participants; broad political and economic shifts that undermined the organizers' optimism about gaining new resources for their project; burnout of the original organizers followed by their natural transition to other activities; philosophical differences that lingered, fueling personal conflicts that could not be contained within the structure that they were able to create; and an inability to transition to either a new group of organizers or a new form of organization that could hold itself together and carry on.

Commitment to not taking resources from others gave WSPA important intellectual freedoms, but hobbled some of the hoped-for progress toward change. In addition, WSPA's philosophical choice to have each session in a different geographical location meant that organizing tasks constantly had to be redone. For each year's programming in a new geographical locale, new information had to be collected, new working relationships established, and new planning decisions made. The commitment to having a continually evolving structure made it extremely difficult to build on accomplishments of the past. On top of these ongoing challenges, enthusiasm and raw passion for the cause were not enough to meld for the long haul a group of disparate women with varying approaches to the problems at hand. The overlap and linking of their commitment to similar high aspirations kept them going, but without sufficient resources to achieve these goals, burnout was almost inevitable. In this they were not alone; many other second wave feminist projects encountered exactly the same challenges, with essentially the same outcomes (Evans 2003, Rosen 2006).

Even among the founders of WSPA I interviewed for this research, there seemed to be no final consensus about whether WSPA failed to achieve its goals in some substantial way, ended through sheer exhaustion, or came to a natural end and should not be mourned. Katrin said “we were burnt out to a certain extent and . . . the founders were all in different places. To do something which is so all-consuming, you have to stick with it and there comes a time in your life when other things become a priority and . . . we were all at the place finally that we said we can’t do this anymore.”⁶⁷ Others shared the feeling that they created WSPA because they needed it, and when they were ready to move on, it was time for it to end. All of the “founding mothers” I interviewed had strong feelings about WSPA’s significance, though these opinions encompassed an enormous range of conclusions, from the sentiment that this was one of the most important professional activities they were ever involved in to the conclusion that WSPA was a product of its time, and changing times require development of different types of programs to meet evolving feminist needs and aspirations.

Difference, Diversity, Inclusion

Another important goal for WSPA’s founding group was creating a program that would encompass diversity and facilitate inclusion and connection among the women participants. The women of WSPA were responding to their own circumstances to create the change they wanted in their own lives, yet they were also aware of broader issues and concerns such as race and class, in large part through their own exposure to the women’s movement and other actions for social equality and justice. They were committed to working across differences, as they understood those issues at the time, within their simultaneous focus on egalitarian, non-hierarchical personal relationships.

WSPA’s theorizing and activism at first focused on topics of interest to this small group of white women who had the privilege of access to higher education and participation in the professional fields of design and planning, even though they were significantly marginalized as women in these fields. But the WSPA organizers evolved to recognize a broader set of differences, and WSPA’s movement toward the conference-style event of 1981 was in large part recognition of the importance of working with women of different class, racial, and economic backgrounds. To put their work on issues of feminism and difference

⁶⁷ Adam interview, 2011.

in context, the WSPA founders were organizing their first summer program during the 1974-1975 year. White women's feminist organizing had been growing since the late 1960s, but did not at first make a strong connection to the theorizing and activism of women of color and lesbians. The Combahee River Collective began meeting in 1974 and produced its Statement, one of the first written documents on black feminism, in 1977, although this was not widely available until the early 1980s when it was published in three anthologies on feminists of color (Combahee River Collective 1986, 3). This text explicitly linked black feminism with an analysis of "racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression" and took on the "development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking (Combahee River Collective 1986, 9).

In their written planning documents the WSPA founders laid out notions of inclusiveness around design fields and disciplines, differences of age, region, professional versus community backgrounds, and "lifestyle," a concept that included a variety of factors including sexuality. They believed they could overcome these differences despite their "diversity in politics, lifestyles, age, geography, education and work experience," through "a basic acceptance of each other as equally responsible and equally capable of making some contribution" to WSPA.⁶⁸ The work-study aspect of WSPA was intended as a way of dealing with elitism by providing a way for those who could not afford full tuition to attend.⁶⁹ Their understanding that this was not entirely successful led to new strategies for participation including adding the shorter, less expensive, weekend sessions and finally, moving to the conference model in order to facilitate far greater inclusiveness of participants at much lower cost for each one.

Nearly forty years later the concept of diversity in social justice work is defined somewhat differently, but the women of WSPA were working within the concepts of their time and were fairly successful in addressing their initial list. They carried out extensive publicity to reach women from different geographical and lifestyle backgrounds; they discussed the needs of women with children and developed the weekend-only option to allow those who had neither time nor funds to attend a two-week session; they organized a conference, in part, to facilitate bringing some of their ideas about change to a larger group of women representing much greater diversity in race, ethnicity, and social and economic class than was represented in their original group.

⁶⁸ Weisman and Birkby, WSPA Background Facts, 4, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁶⁹ Weisman and Birkby, WSPA Background Facts, 8, WSPA Records, SSC.

Managing Differences and Conflicts

One of the many structural challenges WSPA faced was the constant need to accomplish many difficult tasks within a rather short time frame. The WSPA founders had a clear commitment to an egalitarian organizational structure, CR, and collective decision-making processes, but using these processes to achieve consensus and manage group differences was very time consuming. In the face of the organizational tasks necessary to make the sessions happen, the process of writing and distributing memos was cumbersome and the CR process to achieve consensus was simply too slow. Some members of the original group of founders knew each other and had already worked together—the New York City group consisting of Phyllis, Katrin, and Ellen, who were soon joined by Leslie; the Boston group of Marie and Joan. But the whole group of seven had not worked together before. The prior connections probably helped the flow of work at times, but also created problematic subgroupings. Another form of difference that demanded attention during the running of WSPA was tensions between organizers on the East Coast—primarily in New York City and Boston—and those on the West Coast—primarily in the San Francisco area.

Other ongoing frustrations were documented in the minutes, letters, and newsletters generated during planning for the early sessions. Planning meetings lasted all day—and sometimes longer—and a consensus-based process didn't always lead to agreement. The CR sessions that occasionally interrupted official planning tasks temporarily reduced interpersonal tensions in the group but didn't fully resolve major differences in philosophy and approach. Even when CR worked, there was not enough time for it, nor were the newer organizers perhaps as well versed in CR, or as committed as the original participants had been to using it as an ongoing communication practice.

No space can be free from its internal workings. Along with humor, pleasure, idealism, and cooperation, there were communication difficulties, differences, and conflict. In 1978, Joan wrote of problems in communication between WSPA members that took place during planning for the first session in 1975. She ultimately decided to withdraw from WSPA planning because it did not seem able to achieve a form that met her personal goals. She was aware that she was “primarily task and not maintenance

oriented” yet vulnerable to the feeling of being misunderstood by others. The end result was that the “final work left me drained of enthusiasm for a project I had expected would be enjoyable and exciting.”⁷⁰

Joan’s background in organizational development meant that she was perhaps more able, or at least more willing, to identify some of the organizational difficulties the group experienced. She was particularly sensitive to conflicts between the group’s instrumental and expressive goals, and observed that organizational challenges were exacerbated by the difficulties of long-distance decision making, feelings of competition between coordinators, and the time constraints of planning under such stressful conditions, when perhaps the founders and later coordinators should have prioritized more time “for confirming supportiveness of one another.”⁷¹

Moving On

Like many creative and radical efforts of women’s activism of the 1970s, feminist activism in environmental design, including the creation of WSPA, came up against many of the same challenges of other such organizations; conflict and tension about feminist philosophies, priorities, and tasks were common (Evans 2003, Rosen 2006). But the relative brevity of its formal existence is not a summary of its significance, at least to the participants. The founders of WSPA tried to assess its effects from the very beginning. A 1979 summary of WSPA’s history concluded with an assessment of the organization’s accomplishments to that time:

A final and important dimension of WSPA’s evolution pertains to the organization’s growing appreciation of its own strengths and capabilities. In 1975 our first concern was the chance to be together for a little while. Although this remains very important, there has come to be more discussion of the many possibilities for outside collaboration; joint writing efforts; mutual consulting; curriculum reform; lobbying; neighborhood or community projects; etc. We are growing as individuals and as an organization. While we still have much to learn, we already have much to share. We are inching toward one of the Founding Mother’s dreams: “To achieve a collective visibility and power base within which to effect a change in the priorities and practices within environmental design.”⁷²

WSPA was successful in creating a women-only space that by its nature was an alternative to environmental design education of its time, even if a temporary one. It was perhaps not “the first such

⁷⁰ Sprague A108 Learning Paper #II More About WSPA, October 22, 1975, 4, Sprague Papers, Schlesinger Library.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² WSPA’s History, 2, WSPA Records, SSC.

school in America to be completely founded, funded, and run by women”⁷³ (that may have been Lowthorpe), but in this self-consciously alternative space, like-minded individuals had the opportunity to learn from other women and explore a variety of ideas about design in a context that was unprecedented. In this regard, WSPA certainly enacted one of its own original goals, which was to exemplify a feminist education in both form and content. In 1983, Weisman and Birkby summarized WSPA’s intentions and what they felt was its success:

WSPA affirms and clarifies . . . that a feminist education must consist of two equally important factors. One is the analysis and evolution of information, theory, and ideology. The other is the development of an actual context which reflects those values. A feminist analysis, and even the generation of new ideas, can take place in many environments, including establishment academic institutions. A feminist education cannot. It must synthesize the two factors of analysis and context: the intellectual with the experiential, the facts with the behavior, the ideology with the structure. . . . Learning in this sense is holistic, and it cannot be achieved under a traditional hierarchical system whose organization and methods deny the fundamental tenets of feminism—no matter how radical the concepts, rhetoric, and visions are, or who expresses them. (Weisman and Birkby 1983, 245)

On another level, WSPA had an enormous impact on some of the women who were involved in it and many of them went on to carry out significant research, teaching, publishing, and activism related to women in planning and design, as well as advocacy for women in broader contexts. Leslie Kanes Weisman gathered information on women who were organizers of WSPA sessions or attended sessions, and their considerable professional accomplishments.⁷⁴ They indeed did move on to the many possible activities envisioned by WSPA’s founders, including “outside collaboration; joint writing efforts; mutual consulting; curriculum reform; lobbying; neighborhood or community projects”⁷⁵ and others. Weisman wrote, “The origins of much of the scholarly research, writing, and academic coursework on women and built environments that exists today can be traced to the pioneering and ongoing work of numerous WSPA alumnae. Many other WSPA graduates have developed noteworthy careers in diverse forms of advocacy and practice.”⁷⁶

WSPA achieved many of its purposes by functioning as a “closed discourse community” (Jaggar 1998) within which women could focus on their own ideas and strengths in a group setting, something

⁷³ Weisman and Birkby, WSPA Background Facts, 1, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁷⁴ See WSPA Alumnae Directory and Reunion Album, 1975-2002, which summarizes much of the work done by this group of women, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁷⁵ WSPA’s History, 2, WSPA Records, SSC.

⁷⁶ Graham Foundation Grant Detail, Lessons from the Women’s School of Planning and Architecture (1975-1981): A Research Study of the Career Histories of Alumnae. Retrieved from <http://www.grahamfoundation.org/abstract/grantDetail.asp?abstractNo=02.118> on February 7, 2005.

many of them had never experienced in their professional educations or practice experience. The organizers used multiple strategies to create what they imagined as a safe, closed space for new theorizing and practice, including the women-only policy, focus on women's culture and values, meeting in isolated locations, use of CR as a formal technique for communication and decision making, and incorporation of some of the basic CR strategies in informal ways to facilitate new relationships between women and new forms of collective planning and design. This closed discourse community created a higher level of support for the women who participated, most of them minorities as women in their other professional environments. This increased support helped some of these women pursue important ideas about design and get what they needed once they returned to their everyday professional settings: "I think what WSPA did for a lot of people was to give them the backbone that would let them demand what they needed to."⁷⁷

WSPA's insistence on creating a "holistic environment" for feminist education also minimized some of its opportunities for long-term collective and institutional change. After 1981, individuals went their separate ways and carried on the feminist work of WSPA in a wide variety of academic, professional, and community settings, but once WSPA ended, the radical physical and conceptual space it had created ceased to exist. Since one of the primary goals of WSPA was to create an alternative and *collective* space, when that space closed up, there was no collective site from which feminist critiques of the design professions and design education could be carried on. WSPA changed the lives and careers of many of the individual women involved in it, but without collective support and a shared discourse space, each one of those individuals was, and still is, vulnerable to the power dynamics of the setting in which she works, whether practice, academia, or community partnerships. Most of the issues WSPA sought to address continue to affect women in design and planning, yet no shared discourse space of the breadth and scope they attempted has emerged, leaving women and other minorities within these fields still on their own, or organizing in very small groups that still lack sufficient resources to achieve their goals. Mainstream design and design education resist change in any case, but the founders of WSPA, in directing their energies towards creating a radical alternative that did not survive, perhaps also foreclosed some potential opportunity to see their ideas and ideologies carried on, though in transmuted forms.

⁷⁷ Berkeley interview, 2007.

More than thirty years of hindsight offer a different perspective from which to evaluate the effects of WSPA and other second wave-inspired feminist organizing in the design professions. The number of women in these professions has increased but feminist ideas have cycled once again to the periphery of theoretical and practical attention (Havenhand 2004, Rahder and Altilia 2004). The possibility that gender analysis might be relevant to the design disciplines remains marginalized, even if perhaps not as controversial as it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these groups, like WSPA, have been organized by very small groups of people or even a single individual, and have existed only as long as that small group has had the resources to continue. Even within these groups, the idea that an explicitly feminist perspective would be valuable in fundamental rethinking the forms of the built environment is seldom a priority, even among those interested in social change through design and planning. Katrin reflected in 2002, “I only regret that the goal we set ourselves then, of improving the lives of women—and men—and their children by reevaluating the spatial patterns reflected in our environment, which perpetuate the status quo, is still unfulfilled. Somehow, I got bogged down in helping individuals in my work, not making the big advance which could make the difference.”⁷⁸

⁷⁸ WSPA Alumnae Directory and Reunion Album, 1975-2002, 2, WSPA Records, SSC.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING FROM WSPA: CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

Introduction

I started this research study wanting to know more about the Women's School of Architecture and Planning and its efforts to change the fields of planning and architecture in the 1970s. Along the way, WSPA turned into something much more, for both me and this project—it became a lens through which to view the much longer trajectory of women in the environmental design fields and professions in the United States. Studying WSPA helped me frame questions about women in planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design. It also helped me think about broader issues of difference, diversity, representation, inclusion, participation, and equity in all of the spatial design fields and professions. This led me to explore how the relevant fields have formed and shaped themselves using ideas about gender, race, class, and sexuality that are deeply embedded in professional norms and ideologies, and virtually invisible to most participants and observers. Using WSPA as a framework for analysis of the place of women and other marginalized groups in design and planning opens up multiple new avenues for investigation; it does not so much answer questions as help identify new questions that generate new lines of inquiry and new possibilities for action.

In keeping with the many paths I have followed along this peripatetic journey through women's work in the environmental design fields and professions, participation in the professions, education for the professions, and imaginings about the built and designed environment, I have gathered many insights and generated new questions. The theoretical frames and methodologies I chose for this study allowed for the possibility of working between and across disciplines, introducing and exploring formerly excluded positions and perspectives, and working in multiple ways simultaneously. Here I will summarize the most important elements of this journey, and elaborate on the lessons that seem most likely to contribute to a map of future paths and projects.

The two most important parts of my study have been the tasks of 1) developing a new standpoint to investigate WSPA that is both interdisciplinary (within the design fields) and intersectional (in terms of categories of difference such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and others), and 2) utilizing mixed

and hybrid methodologies drawn from diverse fields to carry out a case study of WSPA as an intentionally and explicitly feminist educational intervention in the design fields and professions in the United States of the 1970s. These wide-ranging goals have allowed me to identify some important generative principles for intersectional feminist activism in design and planning. My study has highlighted generative principles that tend to be overlooked when disciplinary boundaries are respected, difference is seen as something that can be “added in” to existing structures, and conventional methodologies limit the sources of information. These principles are discussed in the final section of this chapter.

One of the challenges of interdisciplinary work is that of being sufficiently knowledgeable and situated in all of the disciplines that one is invoking to really understand each field’s approach and use it appropriately. The risk is that one is just grabbing what seems, from the outside, to be a useful tool for one’s current need. The limitations of a single person’s education, career trajectory, and lifetime experiences mean that I cannot be fully embedded in all of the fields I have used for my study. On the side of my project that utilizes intersectional frameworks, I acknowledge that I cannot occupy all marginalized positions, let alone every combination of such experiences, nor fully understand every form of exclusion from the point of view of the excluded. More can always be revealed and elucidated, most especially by those who have experienced these positions from the inside.

Despite these limitations, crossing disciplinary boundaries and introducing multiple outsider perspectives are necessary acts that allow for new understandings and new possibilities in design and planning, precisely because the frameworks of professional disciplines structure the relationships between professions and usually minimize the contributions of marginalized groups, persistently and in a variety of complex ways. At the same time I recognize that even multiple shifts may not be sufficient to enact structural change in design and planning, given the extent and depth of the systems currently in place to organize these fields and professions. The notion of project space, as I have explored it here, creates an opening to recognize efforts to change design and planning on the basis of new positionalities and subjectivities and learn from these projects and programs, even if they were not fully successful in meeting their own ambitious goals.

Even within the design fields and professions I have discussed in this dissertation, my research and analysis has been inflected by my personal experiences and limited by the origin of this project as an effort

to understand WSPA. I have criticized the profession of architecture while neglecting its allied fields of architectural history, historic preservation, building technology, construction, and urban design. I have emphasized the technical side of planning over that field's equally important social concerns and community development. I have paid relatively little attention to landscape architecture and none at all to its allied fields such as landscape planning and preservation. I have discussed interior design and interior architecture within the broader spectrum of spatial design fields, but made little progress toward fully elucidating and understanding them through the intersectional feminist framework I have brought to bear on other aspects of this dissertation. Despite the perhaps insufficiently theorized aspects of this particular work, I hope I have laid some useful foundations for continuation of these explorations in future research.

This interdisciplinary and intersectional study also shows the importance of attending to related fields outside the design professions, where interests and goals related to spatial, social, historical, and technical aspects of design and environmental issues align and interact, such as in engineering, technology studies, urban history, urban and regional studies, ability/disability studies, and the enormous body of literature in geography, sociology, and other social science and humanities fields that addresses gender, sexuality, and space. My work here, connecting David Harvey's theories of abstract, relative, and relational space (2006); Castells's idea of project identities (1977); Ann Ferguson's notion of bridge identities (1997); Alison Jaggar's concept of closed discourse spaces (1998), and my own discussion of hybrid/bridge practices into the concept of project space (Cahn 2007, 2009), is an ideological effort to identify strategies and tactics that can be used to connect marginalized identities to the ideas and practices of the spatial design fields and professions.

Beyond the creation of transformational space for creative new efforts for change, another value of models drawn from other forms of organization building and activism such as hybrid identities, bridge practices, and "project" forms of work is that they allow for the creation and evolution of project identities, that is, new ways of thinking about the self as a professional and in relation to communities one is a part of, or seeks to serve through professional services. When institutional frameworks do not exist and cannot be formed or maintained, these individual transformations take on a new importance in the process of creating change. Visionary individuals, almost by definition, have developed project identities.

The goals of this study were multiple and complex: to broaden our perspective by thinking and looking at design and planning in interdisciplinary and intersectional ways; to look at all the environmental design fields and professions together; to look not just at women in design and planning, but at how multiple forms of difference are created, defined, and used to both include and exclude categories of people from various roles. While I do not propose a new, overarching approach to studying these fields or topics, this study does lay a foundation for identifying new themes and principles for such work.

My theoretical and methodological explorations are intended to open new paths to understanding existing fields and professions, and encourage development of new critiques of these systems of designing and producing spaces and structures as well as knowledge and values about these environments. This study aggregates multiple forms of social and professional change that have occurred in widely varying times and locations to argue that these past efforts to introduce new ideas and new participants into the spatial design fields have had value and continue to provide lessons we can learn from to shape future interventions. Additional critical practices gained from other types of research help us attend to the smaller and often more subtle efforts led by people outside the mainstream and not anointed as authorities. A new routine of listening for the voices not being heard, seeking out the work that isn't being seen, and making the effort to find and remember interventions that have fallen by the wayside all provide new views of old outcomes that can now be seen not as failures, but as successful interventions of uncommon and unexpected types, which demonstrate that meaningful change can be created in many ways.

I support a philosophy, an attitude, an approach to developing knowledge and creating ways of working in the designed and constructed world that seeks out, acknowledges, and values the broadest possible group of participants in the most interactive possible ways. I propose a form of environmental alchemy through which we value, study, and include the visions of everyone who occupies and is affected by these environments, as these environments and participants evolve over time. During the past 150 years, the planning and design fields have formed themselves so that socially and economically privileged individuals have had greater opportunities to imagine and shape our physical environments and been recognized for doing so. Social contexts and values are changing, and our visions of design and planning should respond to these changes by accommodating new individuals, social values, and even aesthetic preferences.

My historical investigations point out the relative futility of trying to resolve the shortcomings of planning and design by proposing a new field, discipline, or profession, or by creating a new specialty area that will generate credentials, continuing education, and more letters and acronyms to list after one's name. I am skeptical that the problems created by professional norms and structures can be solved through more of the same: in Audre Lorde's words "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Rather, through the idea of project space, in which alternate ways of being are identified and nurtured and new forms of knowledge are developed and practiced, I imagine an evolving series of alternative approaches to design and planning that results in insights and forms of practice that bring forward areas of concern and people who have formerly been marginalized and excluded. Some of these ideas and individuals may become "mainstreamed" and join the existing fields and professions, while others, I hope, will continue to evolve and produce new expressions of creative thought to contribute to the fundamentally creative human endeavor of imagining and producing the planned, designed, and built environments we occupy.

Investigating Project Space(s)

Returning to Harvey's notions of space offers new insights about WSPA as well as about other interventions to change opportunities for women and other marginalized groups in the design professions. In Chapter 3, I sought to use Harvey's notions of abstract, relative, and relational space to understand theories and interventions in the design professions, and in particular, theories and interventions related to gender and other forms of difference (Harvey 2006). Abstract space is characterized by fixed boundaries, standardization, boundaries, and focus on mastery and control. Relative space is characterized by multiple, overlapping realms that allow for more complex views from a variety of positions and values, but may still be understood in relation to each other. Relational space is even more complex, constructed of shifting and potentially mutually incommensurable points of view that coexist, yet lack any common reference points. Harvey himself argued that relational space is highly appropriate for analyzing complex topics such as social interaction with urban space, collective memory, and identity.

Professions, in general, seek to create and occupy abstract space. Activities considered part of the profession are bounded and defined; participants are proscribed and limited; relationships with those outside the profession are constructed along hierarchical lines that seldom change; economic relationships

are organized on the notion that information and expertise flow one direction (from professionals to their clients) and money the other (from clients to professionals). Abstract space is the source of legitimizing identities: the positions, organizations, and roles of civil society (Castells 1977). Professions, as social and structural entities that serve society by providing specialized skills and knowledge, also simultaneously strive to create and maintain a sense of exclusiveness and hierarchy about participants and their activities. The structural conditions that define planning as one activity, architecture as another, and landscape architecture, and interior design as yet different ones, do not allow for questions or analytical investigations that defy these fundamental distinctions.

The normative abstract analytical frames of the design and planning professions do not provide much help in performing a gender analysis of these fields and activities or interrogating any other kind of difference. Accepting the manner in which these fields incorporate gender and other forms of difference (or more often, do not incorporate these factors) results in “equal opportunity” or typically “women’s rights” research questions such as, “Why are there not more women in male-dominated fields?” (or more men in female-dominated ones, for that matter), or “Why do women and men leave the fields at differential rates?” A subset of questions, found in fields defined by aesthetic focus on design efforts, is “Why does the work of women in the field not look different from that produced by men in the same field?” The better question is, “Why would women who have made it through the overdetermined systems of professional education—or members of any other group historically marginalized in these fields—produce anything *other* than the forms produced by those in the mainstream group or groups?”

Relative frames begin to create the possibility of new and more useful questions for studying spatial and environmental design fields and professions. Relative space provides avenues for alternative ideas to be formed and find a means of survival. In relative spaces, these alternatives don’t displace the structures they critique but manage to coexist, even if in tension. Many alternatives to hegemonic conventions are generated through relative space, out of a rejection of norms seen as unduly limiting. These alternative spaces and structures create and sustain a sense of “otherness,” especially when linked with “resistant identities” (Castells, 1997). The notion of oppositional positions allows for recognition of alternatives to existing structures of power and accepted norms. Important areas of inquiry here include documenting and sharing the experiences of the marginalized, as well as efforts to “add back in” the

participation and productions of women and other underrepresented groups. Within relative space, outsider views do survive in the form of oppositional practices, often in the form of “tokens,” a sole example within a larger matrix that does not change, such as one “minority” employee in a firm, a sole presentation or session at a conference, a single article in an anthology, or one topic of many in a course syllabus.

Relational space perhaps offers the richest opportunity for alternative ideas and practices, as it is not bound to abstract notions of professional knowledge and expertise, nor held in a consistent relationship to existing norms. Relational space does not begin or end in previously identified modes of thought, but is free to pick and choose options as needed and combine them as wished to move toward new, previously unimagined possibilities. Relational space, when combined with project identities, allows for the greatest creativity in goals and programs. Harvey’s notions of abstract, relative, and relational space establish a broad yet structured palette of theoretical approaches that resonate with the practices of the design fields themselves and allow for intellectual work in multiple spaces simultaneously. However, the creative freedom that relational space provides for new forms of research, activism, and practice also make it difficult for such projects to be understood and supported by mainstream entities.

Within the design and planning fields, women’s membership in the professions varies widely, connected to deeply embedded ideas of gender, appropriate behaviors, and forms of action in the world. To many both inside and outside these fields, these norms are seen as a “just so” story not in need of explanation, or alternatively, justified by some sort of “natural” association of women with nature and the domestic realm of family, hearth, and home. A variant on this theme is the idea that most women hold an insurmountable aversion to participating in activities associated with science, technology, and business—core elements of professional practice, expertise, and status. Yet this system of design fields and professions is no more “natural” than any other; and only one of many possible ways of organizing the actors and activities involved in imagining and creating human environments. The historical evolution of fields, beginning with engineering and followed by architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and interior design, and their differential gender profiles, suggests a form of “rolling discrimination” over time, as discussed in Chapter 4 (see Table 3). Within this historical evolution, the professions that developed later are more relative and relational in their approach and typically allow for more diverse interests and participants. Landscape architecture remains more closely modeled on architecture; planning, as a more

relational field, retains more interest in and models for community involvement and participation. Interior design, the field most closely allied with traditionally and conventionally women's work, is still actively engaged in struggles around title, scope of practice, and licensure, evidence of the field's ongoing struggle to separate professional work deemed to be of higher status (interior design or interior architecture) from lower status work (residential or domestic) performed by those with less training (interior decoration).

Even when the social structures typical of abstract space are recognized to be problematic in the professions, they reinforce and are reinforced by the legitimizing identities of participants, whether in the role of those with expertise (professionals), those in need of that expertise (clients), or those who support and regulate professions through the apparently ever-proliferating set of organizations and entities that manage professions and professional practice (see Table 4). Each profession conceives and organizes these roles somewhat differently based on the typical design task, form of client, and source of compensation, yet within the hierarchy of design fields, the primary structures remain resistant to change. Since education for the professions is inextricably linked to the forms of practice that the professions enact more broadly, educational models are equally slow to change. Educational programs may be even more important sites of resistance to change because they are somewhat insulated from the economic pressures that influence professional practice.

Given the more fixed nature of the abstract space in which the professions normally function, it's no surprise that alternative ideas, participants, and models of service provision have a difficult time penetrating and becoming embedded in existing structures. A variety of models for such activities in the design fields appear and disappear. Many different models, such as community design studios, "pro bono" work by professionals for needy clients, and community service learning—the newest form of public service in academia—appear and disappear, while usually remaining poorly funded, low in status, and vulnerable to displacement by more popular or more highly promoted components of education and professional focus and expertise. The topics that remain central in the educational process cluster around the provision of services through a conventional fee-for-service business model and other topics deemed central to each field, by the "powers that be"—who are almost always the "insiders" of the professional organizations.

Harvey's ideas of space remind us that we don't occupy one form of space at a time; concepts of space can coexist, and are most useful when they help us understand ideas, events, and accomplishments on several levels simultaneously. Projects such as WSPA, conceived of and carried out in a relational mold, are not reducible to abstract structures, such as the typical organization of professional education, credentialing, and practice. It's no wonder WSPA isn't mentioned in the standard histories, there is no place for it. WSPA utilized relative and oppositional concepts of space when it specifically critiqued the design professions. WSPA also used relational, project space when it developed educational practices that combined ideas from conventional design education with those from women's movement of the time. In addition, WSPA had its moments of abstract space, especially when creating a women-only educational environment. Separatism for women was not necessarily seen by those at the time as anti-male and at least for heterosexual women was perceived by many as an important, time-limited experience.

In Chapter 4, I argued that the development of the design professions in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century has been a process of organizing the entire range of activities related to spatial and environmental design into a series of semi-parallel fields through which a relatively small number of individuals with specialized knowledge and skills exert considerable control over the design and construction of environments and structures in which many others must live. Ideally this system functions to serve the public health, safety, and welfare by making sure that designed spaces and built structures do not endanger the public.

At the same time, this intellectual and economic system of fields, disciplines, and professions has been created by privileged subgroups of society to engage a limited range of participants and carry out a limited set of values. Within the professionalized planning and design fields, these forces have also created a hierarchy of status and social value built on underlying systems of inclusion and exclusion, and sorted participants in consistent ways: the smallest percentage of women are in the field of architecture and the highest in interior design; practitioners of color are more often found in publicly funded government and municipal work than in firms that serve commercial or other private clients. Within this overall framework, women of economically privileged groups and other individuals have managed to enter these fields and become participants, though in much smaller numbers.

Against this backdrop, women and other typically excluded groups have nevertheless been active in

theorizing about design, writing histories, and affecting the physical environment from the scale of the home to the city even when their work was not seen; devalued as “domestic” or “natural” and defined as less significant; credit was given to (more prominent) men with whom they worked, and so on. Within these structural conditions, opportunities for single-sex education for women were made possible through several independent schools. These schools, created by key individuals who were able to see and respond to opportune conditions for change, created space for formerly excluded individuals to develop new professional skills and identities.

The three independent schools for women in design professions of the early-twentieth century—Lowthorpe, the Cambridge School, and the Pennsylvania School—all created educational opportunities and professional tracks in environmental design for women where none had existed before. These three schools managed to survive for four decades, but each came to an end due to complex issues related to cost, access, professional credentialing, and changing demand for single-sex education for women. Each of these programs focused on a different strategy for survival—the Cambridge School collaborated with a women’s college, which turned out not to have much interest in design; Lowthorpe collaborated with a design college, which turned out not to have much interest in women; and the Pennsylvania School ultimately gave up both its focus on horticulture and its limitation to women students to survive in radically changed form as Ambler Junior College and, eventually become part of Temple University.

WSPA was created under a set of circumstances considerably different from the conditions of the Progressive Era in which these earlier schools were formed, but linked to the past through structural similarities in that women’s interests in design in the 1960s and 1970s were also not accommodated by the professional opportunities available to them. The founders of WSPA created a list of goals that were extremely ambitious and utopian, and expanded the reach of their ideas about planning and design education far beyond the ones in which they had been educated. The intersection of their own backgrounds and identities as women and self-identified feminists with their interdisciplinary approach to planning and design education created a new space for explicitly feminist action in which they could enact a vision of spatial and environmental design that simply could not have been envisioned in the professions as they existed at the time.

Continuing Methodological Issues

A close study of WSPA and the single-sex schools that preceded it sheds light not only on women's education as planners, designers, and architects in the United States for the past 150 years, it also frames new questions about methodologies used to study the spatial, environmental, and design fields and professions. Conventional histories have overlooked or elided the single-sex schools for women in these fields; this study uncovers WSPA and argues for its importance as a transformation education space and as one of a number of such efforts that have existed during the historical development of these fields. How does this understanding of WSPA help to understand theoretical and practical movements for change in the environmental design fields and planning? Is it possible to generalize from WSPA and its predecessors to broader knowledge about change, both historic and contemporary, for women in planning and design? Can these new understandings shift the plane on which these efforts take place and be applied to other marginalized or historically excluded groups of people? These important questions cannot even be contemplated in planning, design, and related fields without approaches that allow new theories, strategies, and methodologies to flow into these bounded spaces. A relational mode of ongoing practice and critical analysis facilitates these explorations.

Experiences of the marginalized

The first challenge is the apparently simple yet continuing difficulty in making space for the experiences, observations, activities, and productions of those who have been marginalized or eliminated from existing professional spaces. If not documented and shared, these experiences are ephemeral and potentially lost to future audiences for their work. My study has focused on women, within an intersectional feminist framework that addresses gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, social and economic class; other frames would interrogate other differences. The abstract frames that define professions exclude not just practitioners and created works, but theories, social networks, and personal experiences. Adding these marginalized voices back into the dialogue about spaces and environments is an ongoing process that seeks not only designers, planners, and their created works, but the experiences of educators and students, clients and users, and the communities that occupy, use, and engage with these designed and planned spaces and objects.

A considerable amount of research and publication on diversity, multicultural resources, and educational equity in planning and design education has been conducted and published since WSPA came to an end. In 1980 a group of women published an essay on experiences of sexism in architectural education (Anonymous 1980). An undergraduate student, Laura Willenbrock, wrote on the experiences of female students in architecture (1991). Marsha Ritzdorf wrote about gender and teaching planning students in 1993; Barbara Rahder and Carol Altilia wrote on the disappearance of feminism in planning education (2004). Many ideas have been proposed on how to incorporate these resources into the educational structure of these fields, including a series of research articles on women in architectural education, describing methods of incorporating gender, racial diversity, and feminism into design and planning education, by Sherry Ahrentzen and Kathryn Anthony on studio teaching (1993), Karen Kingsley on teaching gender and architectural history (1988, 1991), Jacqueline Leavitt on teaching gender in studio (1991), Regina Davis on “Writing Multiculturalism into Architectural Curricula” (1993), and Linda Groat and Sherry Ahrentzen on women and gender in architectural education (1996, 1997). Sherry Ahrentzen and Kathryn McCoy collected syllabi of existing courses addressing these topics (1996) and in 1998 Joan Rothschild wrote from a slightly different perspective, discussing how women’s studies teaching could incorporate environmental design and planning into the gender studies classroom (Rothschild 1998). These articles contain an enormous amount of insightful analysis of challenges and many excellent strategies for improving planning and design education, but it seems that the central educational norms in these fields have changed little, if any. I am not aware of any proposals, since WSPA, that propose single-sex education for women in these fields, or any other form of closed discourse community in an educational setting.

Disciplinary boundaries interfere with interdisciplinary work

Disciplinary thinking allows for specialization, depth of focus, and sustained analysis of important ideas and problems. But every frame of reference excludes other frames, and knowledge that operates within a particular frame is inevitably shaped to ignore blind spots and fit around gaps and holes. Within any single field, even the most critical approaches must honor certain basic assumptions to engage in a dialogue with other ideas. In planning and design, the process of specialization and differentiation over time, especially within the professional specializations and practices, has helped to obscure individuals,

works, and types of practice that are not fully bound by these limits. These aspects of the natural history of intellectual development within each field make it even more essential that inter-, trans-, and cross-disciplinary paths be forged if additional voices are to be heard and new practices are to evolve.

Disciplinary boundaries also function historically to obscure the work and accomplishments of those who crossed disciplinary boundaries or simply worked in more unconventional ways. Framing questions about such individuals from within highly bounded disciplines often leads to limiting, problematic conclusions. For example, the architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright described Catharine Bauer, a prominent early twentieth-century planner who was instrumental in addressing housing issues of her time, as an “architectural adjunct” (Wright 1977, 296). A broader frame of reference, in which professional boundaries were less significant would potentially allow Bauer to be understood as a practitioner who approached her work in planning and housing through a broader lens with its own internal rationale, not as an adjunct to a different field.

Working across conventional disciplinary boundaries also presents challenges in finding relevant materials in design and planning because of the enormous spread of intellectual structures, theories, practices, norms and research strategies, and alliances with other fields and disciplines found in the fields that focus on creating spatial environments. Planning and design are interdisciplinary in themselves and draw from a wide variety of other fields in the arts, humanities, social science, science, and technology. The variable and shifting nature of language and meaning further complicate research efforts that focus on finding and manifesting marginalized knowledges. The word “feminism” and its variants can itself be avoided even by those working intentionally within a feminist perspective, if they know or believe that using this term may narrow their audience or attract negative attention.

Even when allied fields have made planning and design the focus of their work, professional boundaries reduce the flow of information into sites of knowledge production and practice that might benefit from them. The field of environmental design seems never to have achieved its goals in intervening in the actual design of spaces and environments, though many of these researchers have produced extensive and valuable critiques of the professions and associated educational processes (Ahrentzen and Anthony 1993; Ahrentzen and McCoy 1996; Anthony 2001, 2002; Groat 1993; Groat and Ahrentzen 1996, 1997). Disciplines in the arts and humanities that have expanded to include interest in space sometimes attend to

designed objects and spaces, but seldom extend that interest to designers and the process of design. While all of these “outsider” positions have produced extremely interesting and provocative knowledge, it seldom makes its way back into the educational processes through which designers and planners are produced.

Social and cultural perspectives evolve; language and meaning shift

Historical studies of the planning and design fields and professions reveal an ebb and flow in which different aspects of each field take on new importance before rotating out of view once again. Cyclical changes that resonate with broader movements outside of design and planning periodically foreground user concerns and social issues, then retreat again in a return to a focus on techniques and technologies rather than on social issues or the broader public consequences of their work. Within this shifting history, opportunities for women and other marginalized groups have developed and been shaped by very specific circumstances, the details of which are quickly lost to collective memory. Even when concerns for the social realm and marginalized groups have been part of design and planning, the concepts and terminology used to describe differences have also shifted as social and cultural changes evolve over time. These shifts contribute to the “disappearing” of significant changes in numerous ways. What we might call progress results in what were at one time radical shifts, that in hindsight have come to seem “normal.” One hundred years after their creation, the existence of single-sex schools for women in planning and design can seem both quaint and unnecessary, yet within the context of the time, in which women’s social roles were shaped through the ideology of separate spheres, these were highly significant entities that opened doors for many individuals who would otherwise not have had access to these new educational opportunities and careers. And as language and concepts evolve, terms and concepts used at one time may not retain all of their meaning.

WSPA was created in a period in which dialogue outside the design and planning fields explicitly focused on prejudice and exclusion using concepts such as oppression, discrimination, sexism, and racism. Forty years later, these same issues are discussed in terms that have evolved from pointed political critique focusing on power differentials to language that highlights equity, diversity, and “difference.” While this shift from power-laden “isms” to more balanced attention to “difference” may represent a productive evolution toward accuracy and subtlety in analysis, it can also make it more difficult to identify and counter

both overt and covert discrimination, which is particularly resistant to change when it remains unspoken. Loss of language that addresses rank and power can make widespread understanding of social “differences” more simplistic, and make it more difficult to effect change. In the mid-1990s, it was possible to think that feminism, as a critical perspective on society, was going to have as much traction as environmentalism. In planning for example, Bent Flyvbjerg saw them as having some equivalence: “Feminist and environmental initiatives, today central to the structure and functioning of civil society in many societies, got their issues on the public agenda not primarily by rational consensus but through the power struggles and conflicts characteristic of activism and social change” (Flyvbjerg 1998, 226). This prediction was clearly premature. When the concept of “environmental design” was created in the 1960s, it was intended to function as a broad, inclusive field that could harness interest in a variety of topics that have been marginalized in the design professions—or defined out of them entirely—and bring them back into a truly multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to the activities and experiences of humans in the built and natural environment. Perhaps environmental design could even lift political, social, and redistributive justice concerns to the same level in the design fields as it does development, technological progress, and profit concerns. This hasn’t happened yet either.

Given the large amount of feminist work carried out in the design-related fields during the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, one might wonder whether these ideas have actually become more mainstream. There’s some progress, especially in planning; many survey courses and anthologies in that field at least, mention the women planners who called themselves housers, incorporate some readings on feminist frameworks in planning, and include an essay by Dolores Hayden or Susan Fainstein. However, this hardly does justice to the amount of work that’s been produced since the early 1970s. Most architecture and landscape architecture survey courses still don’t include women or non-white males, and the few non-survey courses that address gender or race in architecture that I know of are not offered on a regular basis (typically such courses are taught as long as an interested faculty member is available, but never become part of the standard curriculum). The accreditation standards of the National Architecture Accreditation Board, at least, would allow for a wider set of possible courses, but progress is slow. I know of only a few published articles on feminism in interior design and engineering, even in 2014. And the field of environmental design has been unable to make its knowledge “stick” in the design professions it has so

thoroughly studied. There is a large body of work, but unfortunately, academic literature does not by itself, change common practices or sustain a community of supportive educators or professionals.

The mid-1990s might almost have been the time for a sort of conceptual leap that would bring these concerns into a more mainstream position, but the feminist work of the last three decades hasn't been incorporated into the "canon" of any of the design fields. Instead, it seems that much of the interest and energy to change the design fields has gone into the development of "green design" and a new, intense focus on sustainability. It's notable that the Leadership in Environmental and Environmental Design (LEED) program, which now drives much of the work in this area, was established by the US Green Building Council in 1998, almost exactly the same moment that feminist critique started to wane. Sustainability is an important movement, but once again, a technical approach to environmental issues has edged social sustainability and inclusion to the periphery of contemporary practice.

Sites of transformative dialogue are hard to maintain

Finally, sites of transformative dialogue and action are difficult to create and more difficult to maintain, in large part because they invoke relational forms of space that are not supported by the existing conceptual and institutional structures of the professions or mainstream groups. Such spaces, even when created, suffer from lack of resources on multiple levels, such as time, interest, energy, funding, space, and visibility. Since these sorts of spaces typically lack institutional support and depend on the efforts of individuals, even if those individuals are working in groups, they are vulnerable to shifts and losses as individuals' needs evolve and they pass through these spaces on their way from and to other professional loci and activities.

Efforts to change restrictive professional structures and foster the development of new ideas, individuals, and forms of practice have existed in the past and continue to be created. A number of groups focusing on social change and community participation in and through design have existed since WSPA, but very few of these have had explicit feminist interests. A few newer groups focus on women in architecture, including the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation (bwaf.org) and Architexx, which was formed in 2013 to encourage leadership for women in architecture through design and practice (architexx.org). An incomplete list of other groups includes Planner's Network, which has been in

existence since 1975 (plannersnetwork.org); Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility, which was created in 1981 (adpsr.org); the Organization of Lesbian and Gay Architects and Designers (OLGAD), which was active during the 1990s; ArchVoices, a website that supported the ideas and voices of younger intern architects, which was active during the early 2000s; Architecture for Humanity (architectureforhumanity.org); Public Architecture (publicarchitecture.org); and Public Interest Design (publicinterestdesign.org). In addition to these entities, other efforts such as conferences, exhibits, websites, and academic courses appear periodically when individuals or small groups are inspired to produce them. These may not have the lasting effect of formal, established institutions and organizations, but are still significant manifestations of critical ideas and efforts. The notion of “institution” is overly formal, structured, and ultimately too restrictive to adequately describe or understand many of these efforts, which may be episodic, or even intentionally ephemeral compared to more conventional organizational entities. A relational analysis and project space framework makes it possible to identify these sorts of entities even when they are transient in time and space, or created to meet current needs of the participants that evolve and change so that the project itself does not continue.

Creating Project Space(s)

A fundamental purpose of my study of WSPA and the single-sex schools for women in design and planning that preceded WSPA has been to identify significant factors that have supported development of such project spaces and may be utilized to create and sustain such spaces in the future. This final section of my dissertation discusses these factors as they were manifested at Lowthorpe, the Pennsylvania School, the Cambridge School, and WSPA. These elements encompass qualities of the founders, their relation to outside movements and supporters, and the characteristics of the project spaces and activities. The confluence of internal and external conditions in each unique case creates opportunities for project spaces to develop and evolve. No single one of these elements is sufficient, and this list is surely incomplete, but each of these principles contributes to the creation, maintenance, and expansion of such spaces.

Connection to Social Movements

Social justice movements and socially driven changes in the design professions are greatly facilitated by the existence of strong, broad-based social movements outside these fields. Outside movements and groups invested in social advocacy provide multiple resources such as language that can be used by those in the professions, new strategies for networking and education, sources of intellectual stimulation and opportunities for productive discourse and support, direct links between insiders and outsiders invested in change, and an informed audience that can contribute encouragement and resources.

Lowthorpe, the Cambridge School, and the Pennsylvania School were created at a time when many middle-class white women were seeking new educational and employment opportunities. These schools focused on activities considered appropriate for women, but expanded the scope of their interests and work to push into professions that had been defined and shaped by men. While the women entering these schools may not have left evidence of overtly feminist intentions, their efforts definitively expanded professional opportunities in their fields for women of their era. WSPA was created in a different historical context, but it was also a time during which larger numbers of women were seeking professional opportunities in environmental design and planning. The founders and participants in WSPA wanted the opportunity to focus on their interests and needs as women in male-dominated professions, and used the concepts and practices learned from feminism of their time to meet these evolving needs.

Visionary Individuals

The women's schools for planning and design that I have explored in this study came into existence through the self-conscious determination of one or more individuals who saw a problem, imagined a solution, formulated a set of tasks that brought that solution into reality, and forged ahead, determined to overcome whatever obstacles they found. These visionary individuals were in positions where they could identify a problem or need and take action to make things change. Lowthorpe and the Pennsylvania School were both founded by women with economic resources who were committed to providing education for women in fields newly emerging as appropriate for them at the time. The Cambridge School was started by the fortuitous interaction of Katherine Brooks, a woman who sought

design education, with Henry Atherton Frost, who for thirty years took on the challenge of educating women who were not allowed to pursue studies at existing programs in Boston and Cambridge.

Visionary individuals, whether or not they are members of the group they choose to help, are sympathetic to the cause and in a position to educate, communicate, and persuade other important people of the value of the work. They usually function in dual insider/outsider roles; they see the problems in broader ways than others of their era, and have the creativity to formulate and support new solutions. They not only support new project spaces, they link the professions to larger groups and ideas outside these fields, bringing in attention and resources from a wider group of individuals.

Resources

Even visionary individuals with an awareness of new needs and the commitment to creating new spaces and supports for change require access to resources beyond their own ideas and intentions. These additional resources typically include other individuals or groups supportive of their ideas; funds to acquire necessary space and time to carry out the work; and material needs such as food, utilities, communications, technology, and travel. Psychological resources such as drive, persistence, and emotional stamina may be equally significant. Strategies for raising funds have included putting up “seed money,” charging tuition, engaging in ongoing fundraising, and developing an endowment. Contemporary projects may utilize lower cost internet resources for some parts of their work, but still require access to these networks and time for doing the work. Even when no one is expecting to be paid or make a profit, an enormous amount of energy can be expended in finding the minimum necessary to get a project off the ground.

Accomplishments may depend on relatively simple needs, such as meeting in participants’ homes, using ordinary paper to write on, and pooling funds to buy the stamps to mail out meeting minutes, like the resources that the founders of WSPA scrounged to start their planning process. The founders of Lowthorpe, the Cambridge School, and the Pennsylvania School undoubtedly had deep pockets compared to the founders of WSPA, but they also had much greater commitments to the upkeep of extensive real estate necessary for their programs. The Cambridge School may have had some generous benefactors, but it was not enough to keep them from depending on Smith College for legitimacy and degrees, even though the college did not support them financially.

Critique of educational process from within

Because future practitioners must traverse the educational system in design and planning, the education process becomes sort of an invisible sieve, not sufficiently critiqued by those who shape it or who perform within it, that eliminates new participants and ideas. Unsuccessful students leave the process while successful students become professionals and teachers, who typically replicate and reproduce the values they acquired in their own educations. Those who question the status quo are more likely to self-select out of the fields, which is a loss to future generations of practitioners, educators, and clients. As a result, those who stay within the fields and professions share a special “insider” perspective, perhaps not unique but centrally positioned and usually resistant to outsider perspectives. The Progressive-era schools and WSPA created spaces in which the chronic lack of attention to the experiences of women could be addressed. These educational projects all intervened in design and planning by making intentional changes to norms of professional education and practice. The critical and educational work of all of these schools was enhanced by the inclusion of activities that were creative and fun in ways not usually found in conventional design education, and that facilitated group cohesion and learning.

WSPA facilitators imagined creative learning experiences using methods that were perhaps less “serious” than some those found in conventional education, but made sense as they emphasized cultural and radical feminist values of the time: group building of models from foodstuffs, focusing on peer-based learning activities, teaching structural principles through use of the body, and awarding the “Prix de Biddeford” to every participant. These memorable learning experiences were not just fun; they provided new ways of learning that were inflected by the norms of a community of women. They combined these with methods and skills from design and planning, resulting in critiques and revisions that were strategically effective and compelling to the participants. They also had insider knowledge of what they wanted to change and how interventions could shape new beliefs, experiences, and practices. They also were free to reimagine many of the conventional activities for both humor and learning.

Collective memory and the creation of knowledge

This study identifies processes by which knowledge in design and planning has been lost as well as created. History, a form of collective knowledge, is obliterated through a variety of mechanisms, most of

which work just as well whether they are unconscious or intentional. Professional boundary building, professional education, and professional credentialing are among those mechanisms. One of the tropes of studying history is the idea that if you don't know your own history, you are doomed to repeat it in a negative way. The reverse of this principle is that if you don't know your own history, you are deprived of the opportunity to be inspired by it, learn from it, and carry it forward. Within the history of design and planning education in the United States, WSPA demonstrated the importance of collective memory and the damage inflicted by the loss of collective memory. Just as knowledge of the women who participated in the spatial design fields in the last one hundred and fifty years has been lost, knowledge of Lowthorpe, the Pennsylvania School, the Cambridge School, and WSPA has been lost.

Relational space creates challenges for mainstream historians, since this type of space is continually evolving and constructed only through practices within which it exists, making it harder for legitimizing identities to grasp and comprehend it. This may in part account for the consistent lack of attention to marginalized projects in conventional histories. One result of this collective amnesia is that newcomers to a field feel inspired to create change, but are undermined by their lack of knowledge about those who came before them with similar ideas and projects. This ignorance further slows progress as each generation has to "reinvent the wheel." It would be equally worthwhile to study those who move through such sites in design and planning. Since they move on to other activities they are easily lost to historical and sociological studies; yet their experiences and perceptions might contribute valuable guidance to projects that remain within the professional boundaries.

During the ten-year period I worked on this research and spoke with many people about my dissertation topic, I was often surprised at how many people I encountered *in these fields* who had never heard of WSPA. A few had heard of the Progressive-era schools (most often the Cambridge School), but knew nothing about them beyond the fact of their existence. I have observed that many students and recent graduates in these fields who pay attention to gender and other disparities hold the very strong belief that "things used to be bad, but they are getting better." When I press them to describe why they believe this, they often give examples from personal experience, without the longer perspective that a fuller study of the fields' own histories around these issues would provide.

Intentional discourse communities

Professions create edges and boundaries, limit participants, actively marginalize and exclude groups of people and individuals—perhaps not explicitly on the basis of gender, race, class, disability, or any other status—but practically and effectively through a myriad of other expectations and requirements such as education, cost of participation, and barriers of credentialing. WSPA was a challenge to these boundaries; an intentional, explicitly oppositional effort created by those with partial access to these fields through education and interest but whose access was limited by a number of factors including sex and gender. Such projects contribute to change by creating spaces that are at least temporarily safe from external criticisms, in which relational projects and identities can develop long enough to survive outside these temporarily closed spaces.

Alison Jaggar's notion of "closed discourse communities" is useful in understanding project spaces and justifying their existence (1998). Closed discourse communities are locations in which people who share identities, subjectivities, or experiences that distinguish them from the "mainstream," can meet and process their ideas and experiences to create a place to build capacity for future work. Jaggar proposed the notion of closed discourse communities as an example of ethical global research practice but I found this concept to be useful as a means of understanding the educational projects created for women within male-dominated fields and professions I have researched here.

Jaggar (1998) focused on the global implications of feminist work, particularly on the question of how feminist ethics may best be enacted in a global context marked by power inequities, intensification of interaction and integration, and both nationalism and fragmentation. Her goal was to chart an ethical course that neither privileges the values of the global North nor falls into a stance of complete relativism of cultural values and practices. This creates the challenges of figuring out how "conventional and local norms may be subjected to systematic moral critique."

Such a framework is useful for looking at the challenges of exclusivity and gendered norms and values of professional contexts such as the one in which single-sex women's schools of planning and design were created. Can dominant institutions claim a need for their own "closed discourse community"? I would argue that the design and planning fields already have this in the structures of professional organization and membership. The AIA is not fully open to the public, nor is the ACSA; nor any of the

other organizations discussed in Chapter 4. These groups do have “lay” or community members in a few designated positions, but do not provide open and free spaces for thinking and critiquing the basic nature of the activity. “Outsider” groups have a need for “safer” if not “safe” space to think, imagine, and discuss their own perspectives on design and planning issues—and not just one time, or once in a (rare) while, but on an on-going basis.

At the same time, Jaggar (1998) pointed out a corresponding ethical need for the fruits of these internal discussions to be brought forward into the broader public realm. I agree that closed discourse spaces, while valuable and still needed, exist within larger groups and societies, and there can be benefits for all sides when new ideas are shared among these larger circles. A corresponding concern with the planning and design professions, is whether places even exist for ideas that have been created in closed discourse spaces, such as WSPA, to be entered into public discussions without being immediately cut off. Where are the journals, conferences, newsletters, lecture series, and academic courses in which these topics can be discussed? If existing professional bodies control the most important modes of communication, how can ideas that are critical of the professions be voiced and heard? To assist in this task, we now have the resources of the Internet, where in theory almost anyone can present their ideas to the broadest possible public. Time and access are still required, so even this more egalitarian communication system is not truly free. But it allows for some possibilities that did not exist before.

I have endeavored to lay the groundwork here for a series of arguments that positions the Women’s School of Planning and Architecture as a successful “project space” rather than as a “failed institution,” even though its life as an activist project was relatively brief. As a project space, it created a physical and social location within the professions to facilitate creative thinking about fundamental aspects of the design fields and planning. WSPA and the women’s design schools that preceded it, each in their own way, created a closed discourse community that prepared a group of women who were marginalized in the design professions for productive participation and intervention in these fields. The individuals who funded and created these schools may not all have had the same feminist intentions, but they worked to create new educational and professional opportunities for a group of people who did not have full and equal access to the schools and workplaces of the day. WSPA was successful in the short run, even as it was hampered by its utopian goals and lack of sufficient resources to achieve them. WSPA created a literal

space for formation of project identities, even though it was not able to evolve into a more flexible formation to accommodate new members with different needs. Within this space, the WSPA founders, a group of white, mostly middle-class women, were empowered to bring their ideas to fruition and share them with others. They succeeded in creating a closed discourse community that supported the development of these ideas within fields that were generally inhospitable.

I set out to create a narrative that allows for a deeper understanding of WSPA and a longer perspective on the efforts of women and other marginalized individuals to enter, intervene in, and reformulate the fields and professions of planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design. Each of the schools I have studied here created a sustained space for a new project, a project space, a site for the participants' collective vision of the activities of design and planning made possible by social and political factors of its time. Planning and design professions, and the fields related to them, benefit from the transformative energy created by project spaces, even if the existence of these spaces is relatively brief. It would be good to have more of them.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

In Chapter 2 I wrote about the methodologies I explored for this dissertation from a theoretical perspective while I was still relatively early in my research process. In this Appendix I describe how that research process evolved in reality, and reflect on the consequences of the process for the results of my study.

WSPA was a unique feminist project that intentionally deviated from the norms of the planning and design fields it intended to change. From its inception to its conclusion, WSPA was a rich constellation of personalities, goals, agendas, and activities, both utopian and practical, and constantly both delightfully innovative and frustratingly messy, just like many other feminist projects of the time, and indeed, many attempts to change the status quo throughout society.

For these reasons, my study of WSPA lent itself to the use of qualitative feminist methodologies that facilitated discussion of the ontological and epistemological questions that WSPA founders themselves defined as central to their endeavors. This choice was also congruent with my own interests as a researcher in collecting information about WSPA, explicating its role in a historical lineage within related fields and professions, and understanding more about the experiences of those who were involved in WSPA programs. I also wanted to bring to my academic work my own background as an architect and planner, with education and employment experiences that parallel and resonate with those of the women who created WSPA.

In short, I have simultaneously had to work as a social scientist, as an historian, and as an architect, planner, and educator. While I can't fully remove any of these "hats," I endeavored to construct a research process that allowed me to engage with each of my data sources in the manner that was most appropriate for that source, that was ethical to all of the contributors to the work, and that would result in a credible, trustworthy, and useful result. Only time and the feedback of others will make a final determination on these factors. In addition to this complicated set of goals and intentions on my part, my research took place over a lengthy period of time during which my understanding and experience of

research methodologies developed, and external circumstances such as time, funding, and access to the relevant data sources shaped what I was actually able to accomplish.

The boundary between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies is less of a line and more of a spectrum of choices that manifest different sorts of intentions about the purpose and outcome of the work. While both kinds of research seek robust explanations for behaviors and events, quantitative research tends to assign predetermined concepts to somewhat limited quantities of data, while qualitative research seeks new forms of information and meaning in what sometimes ends up being unending quantities of data (Becker 1996). I follow Becker in recognizing the importance of “practical epistemology,” or, “what researchers do usually reflects some accommodations to the realities of social life, which affect them as much as any other actor social scientists study, by constraining what they can do” (5). I also acknowledge that the research process had to adapt to my limitations, and represents the best I could do under circumstances that were sometimes outside my control. I don’t argue that I’ve produced abstract, replicable truths about WSPA; rather, that conscientious application of systematic methodologies and methods, enacted from my unique position as a researcher, has produced valuable, generative new insights and knowledge about an under-theorized and under-researched group of people and series of events. I hope others will build on this work.

Research Background and Timeline

My interest in WSPA goes back to its years of active programming, although I never attended any WSPA programs. I began studying landscape architecture in 1975 and had switched to architecture by 1978. Somehow I came to know about WSPA before its final conference in 1981, although I don’t recall exactly how I acquired this information. I was the sort of student who routinely read stuff posted on bulletin boards, and I probably came across one or another item of WSPA’s publicity for one of the later sessions or the Washington, DC, conference. At the time I was moderately interested in the idea of a school for women, but wasn’t ready to pursue the opportunity. I mentally filed the existence of WSPA away for future reference, and went out into the world to slay the dragons all architecture interns face—finding a job and passing the licensing examination.

I crossed those hurdles and continued over many others, always wondering about the issues confronting women in design. I kept one eye out for publications about feminism and women in the design fields, and one ear to the ground for any discussions about it. I discovered that WSPA no longer seemed to exist, but wanted to know how it came into being, if anything like it had ever existed before, and if such a thing could ever exist again. I kept thinking someone else would do this research and answer some of these questions before I would, but that didn't seem to happen.

So when I decided to work toward a PhD, this was one of the projects I had in mind from the beginning. My formal research process took place in fits and starts throughout the duration of my doctoral course work and comprehensive exams, but was built on ideas and experiences of the previous thirty years. My dissertation research process was periodically slowed by hurdles of a non-academic nature and as a result, my interviews and work in the archives took place over a longer period than I expected or intended. I started working in the archives in 2005 and continued through 2014. I conducted the interviews at the rate of about one a year from 2007 to 2012. I started writing what eventually became segments of this work on theory, methodology, and WSPA history in 2005, wrote the main chapters of this work between 2011 and 2013, and completed writing this dissertation in 2014.

Grounded Theory Methodology and Methods

Chapter 2 provided a broad discussion of my theoretical and methodological approach to this dissertation; here I will address some of the more specific issues raised by my research data and process. The complicated landscape of goals, participants, and data in which my research process had to function led me to grounded theory as an overall methodological strategy. Grounded theory utilizes a wide variety of approaches, methodologies, and methods, but the process typically includes a series of steps such as gathering rich data, coding of the data, memo writing, sampling and sorting until saturation is reached, theorizing based on the process, and writing up the results (Charmaz 2006, Corbin and Strauss 2008, Saldaña 2009). These steps provide the researcher with a series of important strategies for coping with large quantities of data and making sense of complicated situations with many participants who may hold conflicting points of view. While these stages are somewhat consecutive, there was also overlap as I explored and revised my ideas, and moved through some phases multiple times.

Gathering rich data

Gathering rich data means that the researcher seeks and includes a wide variety of types of “raw” material in the research process, from ethnographic data to interviews to texts, both pre-existing and created during the research. The category of “texts” used in research may also include images and objects, such as drawings, photographs, film and video, or other material productions related to the study. The data I used for my analysis of WSPA are of two main types—documents in various archives that I visited between 2005 and 2014 (see following section and Appendix B), and interviews with the still-living founders that I conducted between 2007 and 2012. For the historical elements of my study, I used archival materials and secondary literature. I also studied published literature relating to multiple fields and professions, and reviewed ephemera of the past thirty years that I collected during my own time in these fields.

The archival collections I utilized for this work include the WSPA Records at the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, the Joan Forrester Sprague Papers at the Schlesinger Library of the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, and the records of the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture in the archives of the Rhode Island School of Design. I also looked at a small number of items in the Noel Phyllis Birkby Papers in the Sophia Smith Collection for background on Birkby’s personal history, and to cross reference information about some WSPA events.

The archival material included in the WSPA Records collection is quite extensive and rich, comprising the official records that were held in various locations during the 1974-1981 period, which eventually ended up in Phyllis Birkby’s possession when she died in 1994. These include written materials produced at the time of the WSPA programs such as official minutes, memos, publicity information, lists of participants, letters, and financial records. This collection includes photographs and slides, films, T-shirts and other material objects, as well as personal correspondence and notes produced by participants that circulated behind the scenes, which add important context to the official record. I used my time in the WSPA archives to review the boxes and folders in order, taking extensive written notes and coding those notes later. I transcribed many passages directly from the written record as this helped me become immersed in the data. I reviewed these materials during my coding process, and often revisited the original documents on later trips to the archives.

I conducted in-person, open-ended interviews of the five living founders of WSPA; that is, the women who were involved in creating WSPA and were official coordinators of the first session in 1974: Katrin Adam, Ellen Perry Berkeley, Bobbie Sue Hood, Marie Kennedy, and Leslie Kanes Weisman. I conducted the first interview in November 2007 and the final one in March 2012 (see list of interview questions at the end of this Appendix). Most of the interviews were about two hours in length, although in most cases I spent additional time with the person I interviewed, sometimes nearly an entire day. I had all of the interviews transcribed by the same person, a doctoral colleague in another department at UMass Amherst who was well trained in qualitative research methodologies and with whom I discussed the interviews and the project over time. Her care and accuracy in transcribing the interviews and her own interest in the project were extremely helpful and supportive in this process. Along the way I also spoke with a number of other individuals who were involved in feminist work in architecture and planning in the 1970s and more recently. At an early point in my research I hoped to interview more WSPA participants, but this did not turn out to be possible.¹

Coding the data

Coding is the process by which the researcher converts raw data into categories and concepts with meaning. Coding is the analytic process through which the researcher asks initial questions, makes initial decisions, and develops provisional understandings of the data. Questions that help with sorting are typically broad ones, such as “what sort of thing is this?” or “when did this happen?” Coding strategies vary according to the type of material being analyzed, but typically include identifying key words or phrases that describe the contents of the data and looking for groups and patterns within the coded material.

I primarily used “in vivo” coding to identify important themes in these different sorts of narratives (Saldaña 2009). I worked on coding data from the start of my research process, making various kinds of notations on the extensive notes and transcriptions I created while in the archives and on the typed transcripts of the interviews.

¹ Additional research on related topics is being carried out by other researchers, including Andrea Merrett, who is currently working on a dissertation about feminism and architecture at Columbia University, and Aysenur Ipek Tureli of McGill University, who has been working on the history of the Women’s Development Corporation of Providence, RI. These researchers have interviewed some of the same women I interviewed, as well as others who were active in feminist projects of this time period.

Memo writing

Memo writing is the process through which the researcher organizes and elaborates on the patterns identified through the coding process. Memos may be as simple as brief notes written as the coding process is carried out, or lengthy narrative explorations of multiple patterns and themes at a higher level of abstraction.

I carried out memo writing in my study at a number of different points in my research process. I wrote memos while I was defining my overall project and thinking about the outline of the dissertation as a whole. While defining the limits of the project, I also wrote memos that helped me identify themes that linked my data to ideas in the relevant literature. During my research, I wrote memos on themes that were emerging from the interviews and archival documents. Finally, while engaged in writing, I wrote memos to clarify complicated ideas or that critiqued some of the literature I had been reading. On many occasions I stopped while I was transcribing from documents in the archives and wrote memos on topics that were stimulated by what I was reading. Many of these memos merged smoothly into the final document while some were left behind, either because the idea combined with something else or did not fit into this project at all.

Sampling and sorting

In grounded theory, sampling and sorting are the steps the researcher repeats in working with the data until saturation is reached—that is, no new information, categories, or themes emerge. In my process, sampling and sorting functioned in different ways depending on the data. In my interviews, the semi-structured format worked well to bring the data search to a reasonable conclusion. By the time we reached the last few questions of the list, the interviewees were repeating themselves or had already answered the questions the way they wanted to. In some cases I had lengthy conversations with the person outside of the interview in which some additional light was shed on the topics covered by the question, but these conversations usually covered other topics that were not directly germane to the WSPA experience. In my work in the archives, a similar process evolved. At the beginning of my review of the materials, every box, folder, and document opened up new ideas and areas of questioning. After a while, especially as I

continued the process of sorting and writing memos, these ideas began to coalesce into categories that made sense and continued to make sense going forward. At a certain point, no new themes or categories emerged.

As described in Chapter 1, I also used strategies from my design training to work with the data: these also functioned to identify appropriate limits and endings to the data-gathering and sorting endeavor: I worked on large sheets of paper taped to the walls inside my house; I made diagrams of the main ideas and their relationships; I moved, taped, and layered the drawings, and elaborated on them with notes and color until no new themes emerged. I grouped the themes and principles I had identified in various ways as I created outlines and wrote memos and drafts of various chapters, eventually reducing them to the categories that appear in the final dissertation.

Theorizing Based on the Research Process

While I was engaging in gathering data, coding, memo writing, and working through the sampling and sorting process, I was also considering the theoretical concepts and themes most germane to the work. My entire approach to WSPA has been influenced by the literature of feminist self-reflexive research (Fonow and Cook 2005; Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004; Naples 2003; Wolf 1996) and insights I gained from using these techniques for various projects during my doctoral work. My research utilizes elements of interviewing, oral history, document analysis, and autoethnography, combined and viewed through my own personal experiences with the subject matter of the dissertation. Although I did not actually participate in any WSPA programs, my familiarity with the relevant fields makes me more of a participant-researcher than an outsider attempting to understand something new to me. Negotiating insider/outsider dynamics was a fundamental part of my work in researching WSPA.

Writing up the Results

I wrote portions of this dissertation over a period of seven years, while I was conducting interviews and working through the material in various archives. One positive consequence of spreading my interviews out over several years was that it gave me time to understand that my research process was yet another chapter in the history of WSPA. At the beginning I was working from a relatively unarticulated position that WSPA was something “over and done” that I could ask people to recall and describe to me but

that would remain in the past. As the interview process evolved over time, I came to realize that although WSPA may be somewhat dormant in the memories of the women who created it, when they had an opportunity to bring it into the current moment, it continued to have a strong and palpable life force for them. It seemed to me that this was in part because it meant so much to them at the time, and also because so much of what they hoped to accomplish remains incomplete. The energy created by the interviews also helped me understand that my work in researching WSPA was not a dry process of studying something over and done with, but a new intervention in story of WSPA, which continues to exist in certain significant ways.

A few specific ethical issues arose during my study, primarily around working with living subjects. I had promised confidentiality in my initial informed consent documents, but realized later that this would not be possible because I interviewed so few people, they were so central to the story, and they were so identifiable from the historical material. As I wrote Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I realized that it would not make sense to separate any individual person's comments from that person's role in WSPA. So I cited both the archival materials and quotations from the interviews fully and accurately, and provided my interviewees an opportunity to review these two chapters to correct factual errors about their accomplishments or quotations from my interview with them.

Another ethical issue that came up in my writing process was how to handle extremely personal information, which arose as part of the narrative in some interviews or came up separately in discussions outside of the interviews. I decided that my goal was to write a thorough and balanced narrative of what happened amplified by my interpretations, not a detailed personal exposé of all the rough spots these women encountered over the life of their project. In some cases I edited these situations out; in others I grouped them into general statements about challenges or conflicts but did not provide details. Probing further into this part of WSPA's history may be an appropriate project for another researcher, but I felt it did not belong here.

Reflecting on the Process

Every research process has unexpected joys and dilemmas, as well as lessons that are learned only by moving through them. In my research on WSPA, the process presented me with challenges in two major areas: insider/outsider issues and negotiating relationships.

My dual insider/outsider position raised complex issues of power dynamics in information gathering and the possibilities of creating a new, shared narrative that transcends generational differences. In understanding these issues I was particularly influenced by articles by Sato (2004) in her research on third world women and Yung (2003) on her work with Asian/Pacific Islander women. While their specific research goals, strategies, and methodologies were different from mine, they wrote eloquently of the conflicting loyalties created by power differentials between themselves and the women they interviewed as well as different motivations in the narratives created during the research. For example, Yung realized that in several interviews of the same woman nine years apart, the woman told very different versions of the same events, presenting narratives that revealed quite different levels of meaning.

These were important lessons for me, as I observed and experienced similar moments of inclusion, exclusion, and shifting testimony in my own research process. For example, when Marie Kennedy told her story of not wanting to go downstairs to the women's restroom while taking the architectural registration exam so she didn't lose time, I knew exactly what she meant because I've taken that exam, too, and I know from my own experience that the time pressure is enormous. I know I encountered sexism along my own education and professional path, but I never experienced the kind of isolation as individual women that these women did. I understood many of WSPA's critical transformations of design school practices (such as the Prix de Biddeford and their complicated scheduling practices) because I have lived through the norms of education that they wanted to change.

I also encountered the delicate task of negotiating relationships that were not always smooth during the events of the past that I was researching, and possibly remained somewhat unresolved in the present. In addition, there were a few points in the process where interviewees avoided answering a question, or reported that they had historical data or personal information they did not intend to share with me. While these moments of insider/outsider tension were most noticeable during interviews, the archival materials also included evidence of disagreements and tensions. Sometimes these were explicitly

mentioned in meeting minutes, such as when they took time out for CR. At other times, conflicts were apparent through reading a series of private communications that were obviously being circulated “backchannel” to the official documentation of meetings and sessions.

Researcher’s experience of the interviews

I developed my list of interview questions in 2007 and they demonstrate my thinking at that time in my process. I was most interested in the founders’ motivations, the steps they went through to create WSPA, and their memories and conclusions about WSPA when I interviewed them. All of the interviewees covered the material I hoped to learn from them, but in the end, the specific questions I asked were much less important than the process of establishing rapport, having a conversation, and giving interviewees a chance to tell the story in their own way. Each interview was, to some extent, a life review of the interviewee’s career accomplishments. I was left with the feeling that being involved with WSPA was an extremely important life experience for all of them, and whether it was a brief involvement or a longer one, it left emotional tracks that remained important more than three decades later.

One of the most wonderful aspects of the research process was the actual experience of the interviews. Having a chance to discuss WSPA with these women, whose experiences in planning and design prefigured and overlapped my own in so many ways, was a delight. The interviews were not just a source of information about WSPA but extremely important personal experiences. Everyone was generous and kind to me in their own way; our conversations were intense and helpful; the information they shared with me ranged from sad to humorous, but was always heartfelt. These women have helped me understand myself as much as anything about WSPA. I could see parts of myself in each one, and in every case I wondered how my life in planning and design might have been different had I crossed paths with them at an earlier time.

Researcher’s experience in a feminist collective

Another element of methodological process that is relevant here is my own experience working with a feminist organization that utilized a collective feminist organizational model similar to what most of the founders of the founders and participants in WSPA tried to achieve. In the 1990s, I was the managing

editor of a journal of women's studies, founded in the 1970s, that was housed in a women's studies program in a large university, in a city with a sizeable feminist and lesbian feminist community. As the only paid staff member of the journal, I worked closely with the journal's academic and literary editors and coordinated the work of the large editorial collective that reviewed submissions and determined the final content of each issue of the journal. The editors and collective comprised a group of women representing a range of sexualities, racial and ethnic groups, economic and social class backgrounds, and included both academic and community women.

Although this group was referred to as a collective and ostensibly made decisions by consensus, in reality the editorial process functioned in a far more complex manner that varied according to multiple factors including the personality of the most senior editor present at a particular meeting, the emotional state of the collective members most involved with a particular submission, and the need of the journal for content for the next issue. These factors all interacted with the identities, subjectivities, and power issues of the members of the collective and their relationships to the communities they represented. At its best, I observed an appropriately "blind" peer-review process that actually eliminated weaker submissions and raised the superior ones to the top of the pile; at its worst, I also saw submissions with serious deficiencies pushed forward with subtle or not-so-subtle pressure by senior editors or members of the collective with a particular stake in the piece or relationship to the author or the outside group the author seemed to represent.

Most of the time the process worked well, but when it didn't, it failed due to the same problems Joan Forrester Sprague identified at WSPA—lack of training, skill, and time for processing interpersonal issues that affected the process; failure to take the time needed to be supportive of one another; and constant pressure to accomplish a difficult task on an externally imposed schedule. Group processes are always complicated, but I learned through experience that a collective in name is not always one in function. Even when the official process is non-hierarchical, outcomes are shaped by strong personalities, personal agendas, and a variety of in-group and outside alliances, whether conscious or not.

My experiences in a feminist collective—even in the role of employee rather than as one of the founders or official collective members—provided me with invaluable insights into how such groups function, for better and for worse. I tried not to map my own experiences onto WSPA in a literal way, but

they helped me “read” some of the dynamics I observed in the archival material and heard about through my interviews of WSPA founders.

These personal connections made the research process both more interesting and more productive. They also made the writing slower and more difficult, as I wanted to convey the complexity of WSPA, its founders, and its place within the fields it sought to change. My personal interest in WSPA’s goals and my experiences in a similar feminist group have both contributed to a productive set of understandings from which I hope a richer sort of knowledge has emerged. My closeness to the issues—both historic and contemporary—created the possibility of in-depth engagement with the women I interviewed and the documents I reviewed. I know something about this history because I lived some of it myself, and I care about the experiences of the women I studied because their struggles and accomplishments help me understand my own trajectory through planning and design. I hope that the work I have produced here fosters the creation of new understandings and creative interventions in planning and design.

WSPA Interview Questions

- 1) Where were you and what were you doing in environmental design in the early 1970s?
- 2) How did you become aware of feminist analyses and critiques of the built environment and the environmental design professions, and what did you think of them?
- 3) Did you know about, attend, or help organize any conferences or other events that addressed women, feminism, and design during this time? Which ones, and what was your involvement?
- 4) How did you personally become involved with WSPA? What was your role in founding WSPA?
- 5) How did the group decide to call it a school rather than something else?
- 6) Looking at the list of original goals, which ones were particularly important to you? (See list of goals)
- 7) What kind of involvement did you have with each of the sessions?
- 8) Who were the most significant people you experienced in your involvement with WSPA?
- 9) What were the most significant events you experienced in your involvement with WSPA?
- 10) What was most important to you about your participation in WSPA (personally, professionally, short or long term)?
- 11) Do you think WSPA’s goals were achieved? If so, which ones?
- 12) Feminist theory now prioritizes differences among women as well as similarities. Did WSPA address these issues, and if so, in what ways?

- 13) Were the concepts of planning or designing relevant to WSPA? Please describe your views of this.
- 14) Do you believe WSPA had lasting effects on the design professions? If not, why not, and what do you think would have been more effective? If it was effective, in what ways did it create change?
- 15) Are WSPA's goals still relevant to the environmental design fields? If so, which goals and which fields?

APPENDIX B

ARCHIVES CONSULTED

Noel Phyllis Birkby. Papers, 1932-1994. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture. Records, 1987-1954. Archives, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence. RI.

Joan Forrester Sprague. Papers, 1935-1998. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Women's School of Planning and Architecture. Records, 1974-1992. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

APPENDIX C

WSPA GOALS

- 1) To provide an opportunity to more fully integrate our values and identities as women with our values and identities as designers
- 2) To discover and define the particular qualities, concerns, and abilities that we as women bring to our work
- 3) To create our own national support network of women within and interested in the environmental design fields, thereby achieving an end to our isolation from each other
- 4) To achieve a collective visibility and power base for ourselves within which to effect a change in priorities and practices within environmental design
- 5) To offer a separatist experience for women which would be supportive and analytical of our unique experiences and our common concerns and perceptions as women within male-dominated fields
- 6) To provide a forum within which to critically examine and redefine the nature of professionalism and professional practice
- 7) To reevaluate the processes, priorities, and context of traditional education and to develop alternatives to them
- 8) To decondition ourselves from our competitive male-defined and male-identified educations and to rediscover, validate, and affirm our processes as women
- 9) To become a mobile community in which each WSPA session would be held in a different geographic location thereby maintaining flexibility, avoiding localization, reaching more women, preventing the institutionalization of either people or environment, and proving a unique experience each time
- 10) To establish a structural framework within which the participants at the WSPA session would influence and participate in the evolution and direction of the school
- 11) To develop an organization that would not be based on volunteerism

From WSPA Goals, WSPA Records, SSC

APPENDIX D

WSPA PHOTOGRAPHS

SEE SUPPLEMENTAL FILE

APPENDIX E

WSPA PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS, 1975-1981

SEE SUPPLEMENTAL FILE

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